

THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

AUGUST 1895.

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AUGUST 1895.

*CLEG KELLY, ARAB OF THE CITY:
HIS PROGRESS AND ADVENTURES.¹*

BY S. R. CROCKETT,

AUTHOR OF 'THE STICKIT MINISTER,' 'THE RAIDERS,' ETC.

ADVENTURE VII.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE COCKROACHES.

ONE day Cleg Kelly became paper-boy at the shop of Mistress Roy, at the top corner of Meggat's Close. And he wanted you to know this. He was no longer as the paper-boys who lag about the Waverley, waiting for stray luggage left on the platforms, nor even as this match-boy. He was in a situation.

His hours were from half-past six in the morning to half-past six in the morning, when he began again. His wages were three shillings a week—and his chance. But he was quite contented, for he could contrive his own amenities by the way. His father had been in a bad temper ever since he lost his tools, and so Cleg did not go home often.

This was the way in which he got his situation and became a member of the established order of things, indeed, the next thing to a voter. There had been a cheap prepaid advertisement in the 'Evening Scrapbook' which ran as follows:—

'WANTED, an active and intelligent message-boy, able to read and write. Must be well recommended as a Christian boy of good and willing disposition. Wages not large, but will be treated as one of the family.—Apply No. 2,301, "Scrapbook" Office.'

¹ Copyright 1895 in the United States of America by D. Appleton & Co.

Now Miss Cecilia Tennant thought this a most interesting and encouraging advertisement. She had been for a long time on the look-out for a situation to suit Cleg. The Junior Partner indeed could have been induced to find a place for Cleg in 'The Works,' but it was judged better that the transition from the freedom of the streets to the lettered ease of an office desk should be made gradually. So Celie Tennant went after this situation for Cleg in person.

The arrangement with Mistress Roy in the Pleasance was a little difficult to make, but Celie made it. She went down one clammy evening, when the streets were covered with a greasy slime, and the pavements reflected the gloomy sky. In the grey lamp-sprinkled twilight she reached the paper-shop. There were sheafs of papers and journals hung up on the cheeks of the door. Coarsely coloured valentines hung in the window, chiefly rude portraitures of enormously fat women with frying-pans, and of red-nosed policemen with batons to correspond.

Celie Tennant entered. There was a heavy smell of moist tobacco all about. The floor of the little shop was strewn with newspapers, apparently of ancient date, certainly of ancient dirt. These rustled and moved of themselves in a curious way, as though they had untimely come alive. As indeed they had done, for the stir was caused by the cockroaches arranging their domestic affairs underneath. Celie lifted her nose a little and her skirts a good deal. It took more courage to stand still and hear that faint rustling than to face the worst bully of Brannigan's gang in the Sooth Back. She rapped briskly on the counter.

A man came shuffling out of the room in the rear. He was clad in rusty black, and had a short clay pipe in his mouth. His eyes were narrow and foxy, and he looked unwholesomely scaly—as if he had been soaked in strong brine for half a year, but had forgotten either to finish the process, or to remove the traces of the incomplete pickling.

'Servant, m'am!' said he, putting his pipe behind him as he came into the shop.

'I was referred here—to this address—from the office of the "Evening Scrapbook,"' said Celie, with great dignity, standing on her tiptoes among the papers. 'I called about the situation of message-boy you advertised for.'

'Ye wasna thinkin' o' applyin' yersel'!' said the man, with a weak jocularly. 'For my ain part I hae nae objections to a snod bit lass, but the mistress michtna like it.'

Miss Cecilia Tennant looked at him in a way that would have frozen a younger man, but the frowsy object from the back shop only smirked and laughed. With care, the jest would serve him a week. He made up his mind to whom he would tell it when the lady was gone.

'I wish to recommend one of the boys from my class for the position. His name is Charles Kelly. He is a smart boy of thirteen, and he is anxious to get good and steady work. What are the wages you offer?'

The man looked cunningly all about the shop. He craned his neck over the counter and looked up the street. He had a long-jointed body, and a neck that shut up and pulled out like a three-draw telescope. Celie Tennant shrank instinctively when the man protruded his head past her in this curious manner, as she might have shrunk from some loathly animal.

Then, having resumed his normal slouch behind the counter, he looked at his visitant and said, 'The wage is half a croon a week, and his chance o' the drawer—the same as mysel.'

'His chance of the drawer!' said Celie, not understanding.

'When *she's* oot,' the man continued, laying his finger against the side of his nose and winking with meaning and expression at his visitor. The expression of disgust at the corner of Miss Tennant's nose threatened to result in a permanent tilt, which might have been unbecoming, and which certainly must have frightened the Junior Partner.

'When *she's* oot,' repeated the frowsy one, confidentially, 'your friend is welcome to his chance o' the drawer—if,' he added, with infinite caution, 'she was to leave it unlocked, which she seldom does. It's lock'd the noo! See!' And he shook a greasy knob under the counter till the drawer rattled against the bolt of the lock. 'Oh, it's just like her! She aye does that when she gangs oot. She's an awsome near woman! She has nae confidence, nae open-hearted leebearity, sic' as a wife ought to hae wi' the husband of her bosom.'

'Do you want a message-boy, or do you not?' said Celie, who felt that in the interests of Cleg she would face a battery of artillery, but who really could not stand the rustling among the papers on the floor very much longer.

'Certain she do that!' said the man, 'an active boy, an intelligent boy, a Christian boy—half a croon a week—and his chance o' the drawer.'

Once more he protruded his head in that monstrosly serpentine manner round the corner of the low shop-door. But this time he retracted it quick as lightning, and shuffled back into the room behind. Celie heard him throw himself on a chair, which groaned under him.

'I'm sleepin' noo,' he said, 'sleepin' soond. Dinna say that I ever spoke till ye, for I'll deny it if ye do!' he said.

Cecilia Tennant stood her ground bravely, though the newspapers on the floor rustled continuously. She wondered why the path of duty was such a cockroachy one. A moment afterwards a grim-looking, hard-faced woman entered. She was a tall woman, with a hooked nose and broad masculine face. The eyes were at once fierce and suspicious. She marched straight round the counter, lifting the little flap at the back and letting it fall with a bang. The cat was sitting on the end of the counter nearest the door of the inner room. The woman took her hand and swept it from the counter, as though she had merely knocked off a little dust. The cat went into the inner room like a projectile.

Then, having entrenched herself at the back of the counter, the fierce-eyed woman turned sharp round and faced Celie Tennant.

'Well?' she said, with a certain defiance in her tone such as women only use to one another, which was at once depreciatory and pitiful. The Junior Partner would have turned and fled, but Celie Tennant was afraid of no woman that walked.

'I came,' she said, clearly and coldly, 'to ask about the situation of message-boy for one of my Mission lads. I was sent here from the office of the newspaper. Has the situation been filled?'

'What is the boy's name?' asked the woman, twitching the level single line of her black brows at her visitor.

'His name is Charles Kelly.'

'Son o' Tim Kelly that leeves in the Brickfield?' asked the woman quickly.

'I believe that is his father's name,' said Celie, giving glance for glance.

'Then we dinna want the likes o' him here!' said the woman, half turning on her heel with a certain dark contempt.

'But my name is Cecilia Tennant of Glenleven Road, and I am quite willing to give security for the boy—to a reasonable amount, that is——' continued Celie, who had a practical mind and much miniature dignity.

‘Will ye leave the money?’ asked the woman, as it a thought struck her.

‘Certainly not,’ replied Celie, ‘but I will write you a line stating that I hold myself responsible for anything he is proved guilty of stealing, to the extent of ten pounds.’

It was thus that Cleg Kelly became newsboy and general assistant to Mistress Roy and her husband at Roy’s corner.

As Celie went out, she heard Mr. Roy stretching himself and yawning, as though awakening out of a deep sleep.

‘Wha’s that ye hae had in?’ he inquired pleasantly.

‘What business is that o’ yours, ye muckle slabber?’ returned his wife with instant aggression.

And the cockroaches continue to rustle all the time beneath the carpet of old newspapers.

ADVENTURE VIII.

THE FLIGHT OF SHEEMUS.

NEXT morning Cleg Kelly entered upon his duties. He carried orders to the various publishing offices for about two hundred papers in all. He had often been there before upon his own account, so that the crowd and the rough jocularities were not new to him. But now he practised a kind of austere, aristocratic hauteur. He was not any longer a prowler on the streets, with only a stance for which he might have to fight. He was a news-vendor’s assistant. He would not even accept wager of battle upon provocation offered. He could, however, still kick; and as he had an admirable pair of boots with tackety soles an inch thick to do it with, he soon made himself the most respected boy in the crowd.

On returning to the Pleasance, he was admitted through the chink of the door by Mistress Roy, who was comprehensively dressed in a vast yellow flannel bed-gown, which grew murkier and murkier towards her feet. Her hair was tumbling about her eyes. That, too, was of a yellow grey, as though part of the bed-gown had been ravelled out and attached loosely to her head. Feathers and woolly dust were stuck impartially over hair and bed-gown.

‘Write the names on the papers as I cry them,’ she said to Cleg, ‘and look slippy.’

Cleg was quick to obey. He had, in fact, his pencil ready.

‘Cready, number seventeen—three stairs back. Dinna write a’ that. Write the name, an’ mind the rest,’ said Mistress Roy.

'MacVane, twenty-wan, shop,' and so on went the list interminably.

Mistress Roy kept no books, but in her memory she had the various counts and reckonings of all grades of her customers. She retained there, for instance, the exact amounts of the intricate scores of the boys who took in the 'Boys of the City.' She knew who had not paid for the last chapter of 'Ned Kelly; or, the Iron-clad Australian Bushranger.' She had a mental gauge on the great roll of black twist tobacco which lay on the counter among old 'Evening Scraps.' She knew exactly how much there was in the casks of strong waters under the stairs, from which, every Sunday, her numerous friends and callers were largely entertained.

When Cleg went out to deliver his papers he had nearly a hundred calls to make. But such was his sense of locality and his knowledge of the district that, with the help of a butcher's boy of his acquaintance (to whom he promised a reading of the 'Desperadoes of New Orleans; or, the Good Ku Klux'), he managed to deliver all—except a single 'Scotsman' to one Mackimmon, who lived in a big land at the corner of Rankeillor Street. Him he was utterly unable to discover.

Upon his return Mistress Roy was waiting for him.

'Did ye deliver them a'?' she asked, bending forward her head in a threatening manner as if expecting a negative reply.

'A' but yin!' said Cleg, who was in good spirits, and pleased with himself.

His mistress took up a brush. Cleg's hand dropped lightly upon a pound weight. He did not mean to play the abused little message-boy if he knew it.

'And what yin might that be?' said Mistress Roy.

'Mackimmon,' said the boy briefly, 'he's no in Rankeillor Street ava'.'

The hand that held the brush went back in act to throw. Now this was, from the point of view of psychological dynamics, a mistake in tactics. A woman should never attempt to throw anything in controversy, least of all a brush. Her stronghold is to advance to the charge with all her natural weapons and vigour. But to throw a brush is to abdicate her providential advantages. And so Mistress Roy found.

A straight line is the shortest distance between two points, and that was the course described by the pound weight on which Cleg Kelly dropped his hand. It sped fair and level from his

hand, flung low as he had many a time skimmed stones on Saint Margaret's Loch in the hollow under the Crag.

'*Ouch!*' said suddenly Mistress Roy, taken, as she herself said, 'in the short of the wind.' The hearth-brush with which she had been wont to correct her former message boys fell helplessly to the ground.

'Fetch me a toothfu' frae the back o' the door. Oh, ye villain, Cleg Kelly! I'm a' overcome like!' she said.

Cleg went to the back of the door where there was a keg with a spigot. He brought his mistress a drink in a little tinnikin.

She seemed to have forgotten to be angry, and bent her brows upon him more pleasantly than she had yet done.

'I thoct that ye were a religious boy,' she said.

Cleg stood back a little with Mackinnon's paper still in his hand.

'Pund wecht for besom shank is good religion,' said the imperfect Christian but excellent message-boy.

'Gang and deliver that paper!' Mistress Roy commanded, again looking up.

'I want my breakfast,' said Cleg, with an air of sullen determination.

His mistress looked at him a moment, still sitting with the tinnikin of undutied whisky in her hand, and occasionally taking a sip. Cleg eyed her level-fronted.

She gave in all at once.

'Tak' the knife and help yoursel', she said, pointing to a loaf and a piece of yellow cheese.

She went into a back room.

'Get up, Jock,' she said, giving the clothes a jerk over the foot of the bed, and seizing a water can. Her husband rose to his feet on the floor without a word. Thus was business begun in Mistress Roy's paper-shop on the Pleasance.

And so that day went on, the first of many. When Celie Tennant asked Cleg how he was getting on, he said, as the manner of his kind is, 'Fine!' And no word more could she get out of him. For Cleg was not a boy to complain. His father, Timothy Kelly, was safely in gaol, and that was enough to give Cleg an interest in life. Moreover, he could save some of his three shillings a week to give to Vara Kavannah to help her with the children.

He had not as yet taken advantage of the 'chance of the

drawer' offered by Mr. Roy. But, on the other hand, he had stuck out for three shillings and his keep.

Also, as the advertisements which he read every day in the papers said, he meant to see that he got it.

Vara Kavannah was a friend of Cleg's. She lived with her mother in a poor room in the Tinklers' Lands, and tried to do her duty by her little baby brother Gavin and her younger brother Hugh. Her mother was a friend of Mr. Timothy Kelly's, and there is no more to be said. The only happy time for all of them was when both Mr. Kelly, senior, and Sal Kavannah were provided for in the gaol on the Calton. But this did not happen often at one time. When it did, Cleg went up the long stairs and told Vara. Then they started and took the baby and Hugh for a long walk in the Queen's Park. Cleg carried the baby. The boys of his own age did not mock him to his face for doing this. The Drabble had done it once, and severely regretted it for several days, during which time his face conveyed a moral lesson to all beholders.

It was also a happy time for Vara Kavannah when her mother was safely locked up on a long sentence, or when for some weeks she disappeared from the city. Her father, a kindly, weak man, stood the dog's life his wife led him as long as possible.

Sheemus Kavannah was a poet. The heart was in him which tells men that the world is wide and fair. He had endured his wife in the bitterness of his heart, till late one evening he rose, and with his wife lying on the floor, a log, he awaked his little lass. There were tears streaming down his cheeks. His daughter started from her bed with all her hair about her. She was used to sudden and painful awakenings.

'Vara,' he said, speaking in Irish, 'daughter of Sheemus, Vara Kavannah, hark to me. Mavourneen, my heart is broke with your mother. It's no good at all to stay. I am going to Liverpool for work, and when I get it I shall come back and take you away—you Vara, and Hugh and little Gavin. Lonely shall my road be and far. But I shall return, I shall return!'

Now Vara, being bred where they spoke not the tongue of the old country, understood nothing but the last words, 'I shall return, I shall return!'

So it was in this way that Cleg Kelly became father and mother to the little company of three in the Tinklers' Lands.

As he went on the way of his duty, he found out some things about the business capacity of Mistress Roy that would have

astonished the police. He had, in the impetuous ardour of youth, cleared away the accumulated papers on the floor, and raided the swarming cockroaches.

'Hullo, mother, what's the matter here?' cried one of the customers of the place, coming to Mistress Roy, who sat in the little den at the back.

'Naething,' said that lady. 'It's only that daft laddie. He disna think I gie him aneuch to do, so he's ta'en to finding wark for himsel'.'

The customer, a burly, clean-shaven man, took a long look at Cleg.

'Tim Kelly's kid,' said the woman, by way of explanation.

The man whistled—a long mellow whistle—with an odd turn at the end.

'No,' said Mistress Roy, shaking her head, 'the lad's square. And what's mair, I'm no gaun to hae him meddled. He's the first boy that ever took oot the papers without cheatin'.' A good character is a valuable asset, even in a shebeen.

ADVENTURE IX.

THE WARMING OF THE DRABBLE.

THE Kavannahs lived in the Tinklers' Lands at the foot of Davie Dean's Street. That was where Sheemus Kavannah left them when he went to Liverpool to seek work. Originally they had lived on the second floor of this great rabbit-warren of a land, but now they had sunk till they occupied one room of the cellar. Their sole light came from an iron grating let into the pavement.

The Kavannahs had no furniture. It was just possible for Vara to get some little things together during the periods when her mother was under the care of the authorities. But as soon as Sal Kavannah came out, everything that would sell or pawn was instantly dissolved into whisky.

At all times it was a sore battle in the Tinklers' Lands, for these were the days before city improvements. In his wildest days Cleg Kelly had always befriended the Kavannahs, and he had been as much Vara's friend on the sly as a boy could be who valued the good opinion of his companions. But when Cleg grew stronger in his muscles and less amenable to public opinion, he

publicly announced that he would 'warm' any boy who said a word to him about the Kavannahs.

One day he heard that Archie Drabble had kicked over the Kavannahs' family bed, and left it lying, when Vara was out getting some things for the children. Cleg started out to look up the Drabble. He had formerly had an interview with that gentleman, which has been chronicled elsewhere.¹ Cleg Kelly was on the way to reformation now, so would not kick him. But as a faithful friend he would 'warm' him for his soul's good. Cleg did not mind doing this. It was a congenial sphere of Christian work.

The Drabble was found trying to steal collars off a clothes-line at the back of Arthur Street. Cleg Kelly had no objections to this feat. He was not a policeman, and if the Drabble wished to get into the lock-up, it was not his business. But first of all he must settle the matter of the Kavannahs' bed. After that the Drabble, an it liked him, might steal all the collars in the Pleasance.

'Drabble,' cried Cleg, 'come here, I want ye!'

'Want away,' cried the Drabble, 'gang and say yer prayers!'

This was intended for an insult, and so Cleg took it.

'Ye had better say yours!' he retorted. 'When I catch you it'll no be ordinar' prayers that will help you!'

Cleg had a disbelief in the efficacy of the prayers of the wicked which was thoroughly orthodox. The Drabble was of the wicked. Once he had thrown mud at a Sunday School teacher. Cleg only threw snow, as soft as he could get it.

There was a wall between Cleg and the Drabble, a wall with a place for your toes. With his boots off Cleg could have shinned up like a cat. But three-shilling boots with toe caps are tender things and need to be treated with respect. Whereupon Cleg had resort to guile.

'Hae ye seen the last number o' "Gory Dick, the Desprader of the Prairies," Drabble?' cried Cleg over the wall.

'Gae 'way, man, an' eat sawdust, you paper boy!' cried the Drabble over the wall.

The Drabble was of the more noble caste of the sneak thief. He had still his eye on the collars. Cleg raged impotently. All his Irishry boiled within him.

'Be the powers, Archie Drabble, wait till I catch ye. I'll not leave a leevin' creature on ye from head to fut!'

The completeness of this threat might have intimidated the

¹ *The Stickit Minister*, 10th edition, p. 153.

Drabble, but he was on the safe side of the wall, and only laughed. He had a vast contempt for Cleg, inasmuch as he had forsaken the good and distinguished ways of Timothy Kelly, his father, and taken to Missions and Sunday Schools. Cleg foamed in helpless fury at the foot of the wall. He grew to hate his boots and his mended clothes, in his great desire to get at the Drabble. To the original sin with regard to the bed of the Kavannahs, the Drabble had now added many actual transgressions. Cleg was the vindicator of justice, and he mentally arranged to a nicety where and how he would punch the Drabble.

But just then the Drabble came over the wall at a run. He had been spotted from a distance by an active young officer, Constable Gilchrist, who was noted for his zeal in providing for the youth of the south side. The Drabble dropped to the ground like a cat, with the drawn pale face and furtive eyes which told Cleg that the 'poliss' were after him.

Without doubt Cleg ought to have given the offender up to justice, as a matter of private duty. He might thus have settled his own private matters with the pursued. But the traditional instincts of the outlaw held. And, seeing the double look which the Drabble turned up and down the street, he said softly—

'Here, Drabble; help me to deliver thae papers.'

The Drabble glanced at Cleg to make out if he meant to sell him to justice. That was indeed almost an impossibility. But the Drabble did not know how far the evil communications of Sunday Schools might have corrupted the original good manners of the Captain of the Sooth-Back Gang.

However, there was that in Cleg's face which gave him confidence. The Drabble grabbed the papers and was found busily delivering them up one side of the street while Cleg Kelly took the other, when Constable Gilchrist, reinforced by a friend, came in sight over the wall by the aid of a clothes-prop and the nicks in the stones.

Now the peaceful occupation of delivering evening newspapers is not a breach of the peace nor yet a contravention of the city bylaws. Constable Gilchrist was disappointed. He was certain that he had seen that boy 'loitering with intent'; but here he was peacefully pursuing a lawful avocation. The Drabble had a reason, or at least an excuse, for being on the spot. So the chase was in vain, and Constable Gilchrist knew it. But his companion was not so easily put off the scent.

'Cleg Kelly,' he cried, 'I see you; hae you a care, my son, or you'll end up alongside of your father.'

'Thank ye, sir,' said Cleg Kelly. 'Buy a *News*, sir?'

'Be off, you impudent young shaver!' cried the sergeant, laughing.

And Cleg went off.

'That's a smart boy, and doing well,' said Constable Gilchrist.

'Decent enough,' returned the sergeant, 'but he's in a bad shop at Roy's, and he'll get no good from that Drabble loon!'

And this was a truth. But at that moment, at the back of the Tinklers' Lands, the Drabble was getting much good from Cleg Kelly. Cleg had off his coat and the Drabble was being 'warmed.'

'That'll learn ye to touch the Kavannahs' bed!' cried Cleg.

And the Drabble sat down.

'That's for miscaain' my faither!'

The Drabble sat down again at full length.

'That's for tellin' me to say my prayers! I learn you to meddle wi' my prayers!'

Thus Cleg upheld the Conscience Clause.

But the Drabble soon had enough. He warded Cleg off with a knee and elbow, and stated what he would do when he met him again on a future unnamed occasion.

He would tell his big brother, so he would, and his big brother would smash the face of all the Kellys that ever breathed.

Cleg was not to be outdone.

'I'll tell *my* big brother o' you, Drabble. He can fecht ten polissmen, and he could dicht the street wi' your brither, and throw him ower a lamp-post to dry.'

Cleg and the Drabble felt that they must do something for the honour of their respective houses, for this sort of family pride is a noble thing and much practised in genealogies.

So, pausing every ten yards to state what their several big brothers would do, and with the fellest intentions as to future breaches of the peace, the combatants parted. The afternoon air bore to the Drabble from the next street—

'*You—let—the Kavannahs—alane frae this oot—or it'll be the waur for you!*'

The Drabble rubbed his nose on his sleeve, and thought that on the whole it might be so.

Then he took out three papers which he had secreted up his

sleeve, and went joyfully and sold them. The Drabble was a boy of resource. Cleg had to come good for these papers to Mistress Roy, and also bear her tongue for having lost them. She stopped them out of his wages. Then Cleg's language became as bad as that of an angry Sunday School superintendent. The wise men say that the Scots dialect is only Early English. Cleg's was that kind, but debased by an admixture of Later Decorated.

He merely stated what he meant to do to the Drabble when he met him again. But the statement entered so much into unnecessary detail that there is no need to record it fully.

ADVENTURE X.

THE SQUARING OF THE POLICE.

CLEG was free and barefoot. His father was 'in' for twelve months. Also it was the summer season, and soft was the sun. The schools were shut—not that it mattered much as to that, for secular education was not much in Cleg's way, compulsory attendance being not as yet great in the land. Cleg had been spending the morning roosting on railings and 'laying for softies'—by which he meant conversing with boys in nice clean jackets, with nice clean manners, whose methods of war and whose habit of speech were not Cleg's.

Cleg had recently entered upon a new contract with the mistress of Roy's paper shop. He was now 'outdoor boy' instead of 'indoor boy,' and he was glad of it. He had also taken new lodgings. For when the police took his father to prison, to the son's great relief and delight, the landlord of the little room by the brickfield had cast the few sticks of furniture and the mattress into the street, and, as he said, 'made a complete clearance of the rubbish.' He included Cleg.

But it was not so easy to get rid of Cleg, for the boy had his private hoards in every crevice and behind every rafter. So that very night, with the root of a candle which he borrowed from a cellar window to which he had access (owing to his size and agility), he went back and ransacked his late home. He prised up the boards of the floor. He tore aside the laths where the plaster had given way. He removed the plaster itself with a tenpenny nail where it had been recently mended. He tore down the entire series of accumulated papers from the ceiling, disturbing myriads of insects

both active and sluggish which do not need to be further particularised.

‘I’ll learn auld Skinflint to turn my faither’s property oot on the street,’ said Cleg, his national instinct against eviction coming strongly upon him. ‘I’ll wager I can make this place so that the man what built it winna ken it the morn’s morning!’

And he kept his word. When Nathan, the Jew pawnbroker and cheap jeweller, came with his men to do a little cleaning up, the scene which struck them on entering, as a stone strikes the face, was, as the reporters say, simply appalling. The first step Mr. Nathan took brought down the ceiling-dust and its inhabitants in showers. The next took him, so far as his legs were concerned, into the floor beneath, for he had stepped through a hole, in which Cleg had discovered a rich deposit of silver spoons marked with an entire alphabet of initials.

The police inspector was summoned, and he, in his turn, stood in amaze at the destruction.

‘It’s that gaol-bird, young Kelly!’ cried Nathan, dancing and chirruping in his inarticulate wrath. ‘I’ll have him lagged for it—sure as I live.’

‘Aye?’ said the inspector, gravely. He had his own reasons for believing that Mr. Nathan would do nothing of the sort. ‘Meantime, I have a friend who will be interested in this place.’

And straightway he went down and brought him. The friend was the Chief Sanitary Inspector, a medical man of much emphasis of manner and abruptness of utterance.

‘What’s this? What’s this? Clear out the whole damnable pig-hole! What d’ye mean, Jackson, by having such a sty as this in your district? Clean it out! Tear it down! It’s like having seven bulls of Bashan in one stable. Never saw such a hog’s mess in my life. Clear it out! Clear it out!’

The miserable Nathan wrung his hands, and hopped about like a hen.

‘Oh, Doctor Christopher, I shall have it put in beautiful order—beautiful order. Everything shall be done in the besht style, I do assure you—’

‘Best style, stuff and nonsense! Tear it down—gut it out—take it all away and bury it. I’ll send men to-morrow morning!’ cried the doctor, decidedly.

And Dr. Christopher departed at a dog-trot to investigate a misbehaving trap in a drain at Coltbridge.

The police inspector laughed.

'Are you still in a mind to prosecute young Kelly, Mr. Nathan?' he said.

But the grief and terror of the pawnbroker were beyond words. He sat down on the narrow stair, and laid his head between his hands.

'I shall be ruined—ruined! I took the place for a debt. I never got a penny of rent for it, and now to be made to spend money upon it—'

The police inspector touched him on the shoulder.

'If I were you, Nathan,' he said, 'I should get this put in order. If it is true that you got no rent for this place, the melting-pot in your back cellar got plenty.'

'It's a lie—a lie!' cried the little man, getting up as if stung. 'It was never proved. I got off!'

'Aye,' said the inspector, 'ye got off? But though "Not proven" clears a man o' the Calton gaol, it keeps him on our books.'

'Yes, yes,' said the little Jew, clapping his hands as if he were summoning slaves in the Arabian Nights, 'it shall be done. I shall attend to it at once.'

And the inspector went out into the street, laughing so heartily within him that more than once something like the shadow of a grin crossed the stern official face which covered so much kindness from the ken of the world.

The truth of the matter was that Cleg Kelly had squared the police. It is a strange thing to say, for the force of the city is composed of men staunchly incorruptible. I have tried it myself and know. The Edinburgh police has been honourably distinguished first by an ambition to prevent crime, to catch the criminal next, and, lastly, to care for the miserable women and children whom nearly every criminal drags to infamy in his wake.

Yet with all these honourable titles to distinction, upon this occasion the police had certainly been squared, and that by Cleg Kelly. And in this wise.

When Cleg had finished his search through the receptacles of his father and his own hidie-holes, he found himself in possession of as curious a collection of miscellaneous curiosities as might stock a country museum or set a dealer in old junk up in business. There were many spoons of silver, and a few of Britannia metal which his father had brought away in mistake, or because he was pressed for time and hated to give trouble. There were forks

whole, and forks broken at the handle where the initials ought to have come, teapots with the leaves still within them, the toddy bowl of a city magnate—with an inscription setting forth that it had been presented to Bailie Porter for twenty years of efficient service in the department of cleaning and lighting, and also in recognition of his uniform courtesy and abundant hospitality. There were also delicate ormolu clocks and nearly a score of watches, portly verge, slim Geneva, and bluff serviceable English lever.

Cleg brought one of his mother's wicker clothes-baskets which had been tossed out on the street by Mr. Nathan's men the day before, and, putting a rich Indian shawl in the bottom to stop the crevices, he put into it all the spoil, except such items as belonged strictly to himself, and with which the nimble fingers of his father had had no connection.

Such were the top half of a brass candlestick, which he had himself found in an ash-bucket on the street. He remembered the exact 'bucket.' It was in front of old Kermack, the baker's, and he had had to fight a big dog to get possession, because the brass at the top being covered with the grease, the dog considered the candlestick a desirable article of *vertu*. There was a soap-box, for which he had once fought a battle; the basin he used for dragging about by a string on the pavement, with hideous outcries, whenever the devil within made it necessary for him to produce the most penetrating and objectionable noise he could think of. There was (his most valuable possession) a bright brass harness rein-holder, for which the keeper of a livery stable had offered him five shillings if he would bring the pair, or sixpence for the single one—an offer which Cleg had declined, but which had made him ever after cherish the rein-holder as worth more than all the jewellers' shops on Princes Street.

These and other possessions to which his title was incontrovertible he laid aside for conveyance to his new home, an old construction hut which now lay neglected in a builder's yard near the St. Leonards Station.

All the other things Cleg took straight over to the police-office near the brickfield, where his friend, the sergeant's wife, held up her hands at sight of them. Nor did she call her husband till she had been assured that Cleg had had personally nothing to do with the collection of them.

When the sergeant came in his face changed and his eyes glittered, for here was stolen property in abundance, of which the

Chief—that admirable gentleman of the quiet manners and the limitless memory—had long ago given up all hope.

‘Ah! if only the young rascal had brought us these things before Tim’s trial, I would have got him twenty years!’ said the Chief.

But though Cleg Kelly hated and despised his father, his hatred did not quite go that length. He did not love the police for their own sake, though he was friendly enough with many of the individual officers, and, in especial, with the sergeant’s wife, who gave him ‘pieces’ in memory of his mother, and, being a woman, also perhaps a little in memory of what his father had once seemed to her.

Cleg did not stay to be asked many questions as to how he came into possession of so many valuables. He had found them, he said; but he could not be induced to condescend upon the particulars of the discovery.

So the sergeant was forced to be content. But ever after this affair it was quite evident that Cleg was a privileged person, and did not come within Mr. Nathan’s power of accusation. So it was manifest that Cleg Kelly had corrupted the incorruptible, and crowned his exploits by squaring the metropolitan police.

ADVENTURE XI.

THE BOY IN THE WOODEN HUT.

THE wooden hut where Cleg had taken up his abode was on the property of a former landlord, who in his time had tired of Tim Kelly as a tenant, and had insisted upon his removal, getting his office safe broken into in consequence. But Mr. Callendar had never been unkind to Isbel and Cleg. So the boy had kindly memories of the builder, and especially he remembered the smell of the pine shavings as Callendar’s men planed deal boards to grain for mahogany. The scent struck Cleg as the cleanest thing he had ever smelled in his life.

So, with the help of an apprentice joiner, he set up the old construction hut, which, having been used many years ago in the making of the new coal sidings at the St. Leonards Station, had been thrown aside at the end of the job, and never broken up.

The builder saw Cleg fitting hither and thither about the

yard, but, being accustomed to such visitors, he took no great notice of the boy, till one day, poking about among some loose rubbish and boards at the back of his yard, he happened to glance at the old hut. Great was his astonishment to see it set on its end, a window frame too large for the aperture secured on the outside with large nails driven in at the corners, a little fringe of soil scraped roughly about it as if a brood of chickens had worked their way round the hut, and a few solitary daisies dibbled into the loose earth, lying over on their sides, in spite of the small ration of water which had been carefully served out to each.

Thomas Callendar stood a moment gathering his senses. He had a callant of his own who might conceivably have been at the pains to establish a summer-house in his yard. But then James was at present at the seaside with his mother. The builder went round the little hut, and at the further side he came upon Cleg Kelly dribbling water upon the wilting daisies from a broken brown teapot, and holding on the lid with his other hand.

'Mercy on us ! what are ye doing here, callant ?' cried the astonished builder.

Cleg Kelly stood up with the teapot in his hand, taking care to keep the lid on as he did so. His life was so constant a succession of surprises provided against by watchfulness that hardly even an earthquake would have taken him unprepared.

He balanced the teapot in one hand, and with the other he pulled at his hat-brim to make his manners.

'If ye please, sir,' he said, 'they turned me oot at the brick-yaird, and I brocht the bits o' things here. I kenned ye wadna send me away, Maister Callendar.'

'How kenned ye that I wadna turn ye away, boy ?' said the builder.

'Oh, I juist prefarred to come back here, at ony rate,' said Cleg.

'But why ?' persisted Mr. Callendar.

Cleg scratched the turned-up earth of his garden thoughtfully with his toe.

'Weel,' he said, 'if ye maun ken, it was because I had rather lippen¹ to the deil I ken than to the deil I dinna ken !'

The builder laughed good-naturedly.

'So ye think me a deil ?' he asked, making believe to cut at the boy with the bit of planed moulding he was carrying

¹ Trust.

in his hand with black pencil marks at intervals upon it as a measuring-rod.

'Ow, it's juist a mainner o' speaking!' said Cleg, glancing up at Mr. Callendar with twinkling eyes. He knew that permission to bide was as good as granted. The builder came and looked within. The hut was whitewashed inside, and the black edges of the boards made transverse lines across the staring white.

Cleg explained.

'I didna steal the whitewash,' he said; 'I got it frae Andrew Heslop for helpin' him wi' his lime-mixing.'

'It's a fine healthsome, heartsome smell,' the boy went on, noticing that the builder was sniffing. 'Oh, man, it's the tar that ye smell,' he again broke in. 'I'm gaun to tar it on the ootside. It keeps the weather off famous. I gat the tar frae a watchman at the end o' the Lothian Road, where they are laying a new kind o' pavement wi' an awsome smell.'

The interior of the hut was shelved, and upon a pair of old trestles was a good new mattress. The builder looked curiously at it.

'It was the Pleasance student missionary got it in for my mither to lie on afore she died,' said Cleg in explanation.

'Aye, and your mither is awa,' said the builder; 'it's a release.'

'Aye, it is that,' said Cleg, from whose young heart sorrow of his mother's death had wholly passed away. He was not callous, but he was old-fashioned and world-experienced enough to recognise facts frankly. It was a release indeed for Isbel Kelly.

'Weel,' said the builder, 'mind ye behave yoursel'. Bring nae wild gilravage o' loons here, or oot ye gang.'

'Hearken ye, Maister,' said Cleg. 'There's no a boy atween Henry Place an' the Sooth Back that wull daur to show the ill-favoured face o' him within your muckle yett. I'll be the best watch that ever ye had, Maister Callendar. See if I'm no!'

The builder smiled as he went away. He took the measuring-rod of white moulding in his hand, and looked at the marks to recall what particular business he had been employed upon. But even as he did so a thought struck him. He turned back.

'Mind you,' he said to Cleg, 'the first time that ye bring the faither o' ye aboot my yaird, to the curb-stane ye gang wi' a' your traps and trantlums!'

Cleg peeped elvishly out of his citadel.

‘My faither,’ he said, ‘is snug in a far grander hoose than yours or mine, Maister Callendar. He has ta’en the accommodation for a year, and gotten close wark frae the Gowvernment a’ the time!’

‘What mean ye?’ said the builder; ‘your faither has never reformed?’

‘Na, no that,’ answered Cleg; ‘but he got a year for ganging intil anither man’s hoose without speering his leave. And I was there and saw the judge gie him a tongue-dressing afore he spoke oot the sentence. “One year!” says he. “Make it three, my Lord!” says I frae the back of the coort. So they ran me oot; but my faither kenned wha it was, for he cried, “May hunger, sickness, and trouble suck the life from ye, ye bloodsucking son of my sorrow! Wait till I get houl’t o’ ye! I’ll make ye melt off the earth like the snow off a dyke, son o’ mine though ye are!”’

The respectable builder stood aghast.

‘And your ain faither said the like o’ that till ye?’ he asked, with a look of awe in his face as if he had been listening to blasphemy. ‘And what did you say to him?’

‘Faith! I only said, “I hope ye’ll like the oakum, faither!”’

ADVENTURE XII.

VARA KAVANNAH OF THE TINKLERS’ LANDS.

CLEG having finished his dispositions, shut to his door, and barred it with a cunning bolt shot with string, which he had constructed till he should be able to find an old lock to manipulate with the craft inherited from his father. Then he set forth for the Tinklers’ Lands, to visit his friends the Kavannahs. He had delivered his papers in the early morning, and now he was free till the evening. For since a threatened descent of the police, Mistress Roy, that honest merchant, had discouraged Cleg from ‘hanging roun’d’ after his work was finished. She attempted to do the discouraging with a broomstick or anything else that came handy. But Cleg was far too active to be struck by a woman. And, turning upon his mistress with a sudden flash of teeth like the grin of a wild cat, he sent that lady back upon the second line of her defences—into the little back shop where that peculiar company assembled which gave to Roy’s paper-shop its other quality of shebeen.

Cleg had just reached the arched gateway which led into the builder's yard, when he saw, pottering along the side-walk twenty yards before him the squat, bandy-legged figure of his late landlord, Mr. Nathan. He had been going the round of the builders, endeavouring to discover which of them would effect the repairs of Tim Kelly's mansion at the least expense, and at the same time be prepared to satisfy the fiery Inspector of Sanitation.

Without a moment's hesitation, and as a mere matter of duty, Cleg bent his head, and, running full-tilt between his late landlord's legs, he overset him on the pavement and shot ahead on his way to make his morning call on the Kavannahs. The fulfilment of healthy natural function required that a well-conducted boy of good principles should cheek a policeman and overset a Jew landlord whenever met with. In such a war there could be no truce or parley.

Tinklers' Lands was in one of the worst parts of the city. Davie Dean's Street goes steeply down hill, and has apparently carried all its inhabitants with it. Tinklers' Lands is quite at the foot, and the inhabitants have come so low that they can fear no further fall. The Kavannahs, as has been said, dwelt in the cellar of the worst house in Tinklers' Lands.

Cleg ran down into the area and bent over the grating.

'Vara!' he cried, making a trumpet of the bars and his hands.

'Aye, Cleg, is that you?' said Vara. '*She's* oot; ye can come in.'

So Cleg trotted briskly down the slimy black steps, from which the top hand-rail had long since vanished. The stumpy palings themselves would also have disappeared if they had been anything else than cast metal, a material which can neither be burned nor profitably disposed of to the old Junk man.

Vara met him at the foot. She was a pleasant round-faced, merry-eyed girl of ten—or, rather, she would have been round-faced but for the pitiful drawing about the mouth and the frightened look with which she seemed to shrink back at any sudden movement near her. As Cleg arrived at the door of the cellar a foul, dank smell rose from the depths to meet him; and he, fresh from the air and cleanliness of his own new abode among the shavings and the chips, noticed it as he would not have done had he come directly from the house by the brickfield.

'*She* gaed awa' last nicht wi' an ill man,' said Vara, 'and I hae seen nocht o' her since.'

Vara Kavannah spoke of Sheemus Kavannah as 'faither,' but always of her mother as 'she.' To-day the girl had her fair hair done up in a womanly net and stowed away on the top of her head. When one has the cares of a house and family, it is necessary to dress in a grown-up fashion. Indeed, in some of her moods, when the trouble of Hugh and the baby lay heavy on her, Vara looked like a little old woman, as if she had been her own fairy godmother fallen upon evil times.

But to-day she had her head also tied in a napkin, rolled white and smooth about her brows. Cleg glanced at it with the quick comprehension which comes from a kindred bitterness.

'Her?' he queried, as much with his thumb and eyebrow as with his voice.

'Aye,' said Vara, looking down at the floor, for in the Lands such occurrences were not spoken of outside the family; 'yestreen.'

Hearing the voices at the door, little Hugh, Vara's brother of four, came toddling unevenly upon legs which ought to have been chubby, but which were only feeble and uncertain. He had one hand wrapped in a piece of white rag; and, whenever he remembered, he carried it in his other hand and wept over it with a sad, wearying whimper.

Cleg again looked his query at Vara.

'Aye,' said the girl, her eyes lighting this time with a glint of anger; 'the bairn toddled to her when she cam' hame, and he asked for a bit piece. And wi' that she took him and gied him a fling across the floor, and he hurt his airm on the corner of the bed.'

And Cleg, though he had given up swearing, swore.

'The wean's asleep!' said Vara; 'speak quietly.'

And upon tiptoe she led the way. The dusk of the cellar was so dense and the oppression of the foul air so terrible that had not Cleg been to the manner born, he could hardly have reached the little crib where the baby lay huddled among swathings of old petticoats and bits of flannel, while underneath was a layer of hay.

Vara stood gazing with inexpressible rapture at the babe.

'Isna he bonny—bonny?'

She clasped her hands as she spoke, and looked for the answering admiration in Cleg's face.

'Aye,' said Cleg, who knew what was demanded of him if he

expected to remain Vara Kavannah's friend; 'he's juist terrible bonny—elegant as a pictur'!

He had heard his father say that of a new 'jemmy.'

In truth, the babe was but skin and bone, with the drawn face of a mummy of five thousand years—and tiny hands, prehensile like those of a monkey.

'Vara,' said Cleg, 'ye canna bide here. I maun get ye awa'. This is no to be tholed. What hae ye had to eat the day?

'We had some broth that a neighbour brocht in yesterday and some fish. But the fish was bad,' said Vara, flushing and hesitating even to say these things to Cleg.

The badness of the fish, indeed, sufficiently advertised itself.

At the mention of something to eat little Hugh sharpened his croon of pain into a yell.

'Hugh's awsome hungry! Hugh boy wants his dinner!'

Vara went to him and knelt beside him.

'Hush thee, Hugh boy!' she said, speaking with a fragrance of motherliness which must have come to her from some ancestor, for certainly never in her life had she experienced anything like it. 'Hush! Hugh boy shall have his dinner if he is a good boy. Poor handie! Poor, poor handie!'

And the girl took the swollen wrist and torn hand into hers and rocked to and fro with the boy on her knee.

'Hugh is gaun to be a man,' she said. 'He wadna greet. Na, he will wait till faither comes hame. And then he will get ham, nice ham, singing in the pan; aye, and red herring brandering on the fire, and salmon in tins, an' aipples, an' oranges, and cancellaries.'

'Losh, aye, but that wull be guid!' said Hugh, stopping his crying to listen to the enthralling catalogue.

'Aye,' said Vara, 'and when faither comes hame, he will tak' us away to a boony hoose to leeve where the ships sail by. For dadda has gane to the seaside to look for wark. It will be a bonny hoose wi' swings at every door, and blacky men that dance in braw, striped claes, and shows. And Hugh boy shall gang to them a'. We'll howk holes in the sand, and fill the dirt into buckets, and row our girds, Hughie. And we shall paidle in the tide, and splash the bonny water aboon oor heids!'

'Oh, oh,' cried the child, 'Hugh boy wants to gang noo. He wants to paidle in the bonny water and eat the oranges!'

'Bide ye, bonny man,' said Maggie, fondling him, 'that's a' to be when dadda comes hame.'

‘Hugh boy is gangin’ to the door to look for dad-da!’ said the boy as he moved off with his bandaged hand clutched to his side.

The baby in the bunk among the old clouts set up a crying, and Cleg went to it, for he was touched to the heart by the voice of dumb things in pain, whether babes or beasts.

But little Gavin (called for a comrade of Sheemus Kavannah’s who had been kind to him) was wrinkling all his face into a myriad crinkles. Then, lifting up the tiniest shrill pipe, he cried with the cry of underfed and ill-used childhood—a cry that breaks off sharp in the middle and never attains to the lusty roar of the healthy and well-grown malcontent.

Vara flew to Gavin and, taking the babe in her arms, she hushed him back again to sleep, making a swift gesture of command for silence. She kept her eyes fondly upon the peaked little face, till the wailing ceased, the tiny clenched hand fell back from the puckered face, and the infant dropped again to sleep, clasping the frill of Vara’s pinafore with fingers like bird claws.

‘I was feared he wad waken an’ I had nocht to gie him!’ she explained, simply.

‘God!’ said Cleg; ‘I canna stand this.’

And without a word he skimmed up the cellar steps and out. He went straight to his mistress of the paper-shop, and with her he had a loud-voiced and maledictory interview, in which he endeavoured to uplift his week’s wage before it was due. There were threats and recriminations on both sides before a compromise was effected. It ended in the half, which had already been worked for, being paid over in view of instant necessities—which, it is to be regretted, Cleg did not quite truthfully represent to Mistress Roy.

Then, with two silver shillings in his hand, Cleg went and bought twopence worth of meat from the neck and a penny bone for boiling, a penny worth of carrots, a halfpenny cabbage, a large four-pound loaf, and twopence worth of the best milk. To this he added two apples and an orange for Hugh, so that he might have a foretaste of the golden time when dad-da should come home.

It was as good as a circus procession when Cleg went back laden like a bee, and no humble bee either, to the cellar in Tinklers’ Lands. He had his head in the air and his chest out, just as he used to march when he heard the regiments coming down the High Street from the Castle, and caught a glimpse of their swinging tartans and towering plumes.

Vara met him at the door. She raised her hands in amaze,

but mechanically checked the cry of gladness and admiration on her lips as Cleg came scrambling down, without ever minding his feet on the slippery stairs.

‘Cleg Kelly!’ said she, speaking under her breath, ‘what are ye doin’ wi’ a’ that meat?’

‘Oh, it’s nocht ava,’ said Cleg lightly; ‘it’s juist some things that I had nae use for this week. Ye ken I’m watchman noo at Callendar’s as weel as working at the paper-shop!’

‘Save us!’ said Vara, ‘this is never a’ for us. I canna tak’ it. I canna!’

‘Aye, is it!’ said Cleg, ‘an’ you tak’ it for the bairns’ sake. Sheemus will pay me when he comes back, gin ye like!’

Vara’s heart broke out in a cry, ‘O Cleg, I canna thank ye!’ And her tears fairly rained down while she sobbed quickly and freely.

‘Dinna, Vara, dinna, lassie!’ said Cleg, edging for the door; ‘ye maun stop that or I declare I’ll hae to rin!’

From within came the babe’s cry. But it had no terrors for Vara now.

‘Greet, Gavin, greet,’ she cried; ‘aye, that is richt. Let us hear something like a noise, for I hae gotten something to gie ye at last.’

So she hasted and ran for the baby’s bottle—which, as in all poor houses, was one of Maw’s best. She mixed rapidly the due proportions of milk and water, and tested the drawing of the tube with her mouth as she ran to the cot. At first the babe could not be brought to believe in the genuineness of the nourishment offered, so often had the cold comfort of the empty tube been offered. It was a moment or two before he tasted the milk; but, as soon as he did so, his outcry ceased as if by magic, the puckers smoothed out, and the big solemn baby eyes fixed themselves on the ceiling of the cellar with a stare of grave rapture.

Then Cleg took himself off, with a hop and a skip up the steps, having seen Hugh settled to his bread and butter, eating eagerly and jealously, but never for a moment letting the orange, earnest of the Promised Land of his father’s return, out of his other hand. Vara was putting away the great store of provision in the empty cupboard when Cleg looked his last down the grating which admitted the scanty light to the Kavannahs’ home.

There had been few happier days in Cleg Kelly’s life than this

on which he spent the half of his week's wage for the benefit of the Kavannahs.

So altogether happy did he feel that he went and cuffed the ears of two well-dressed boys for looking at him. Then he threw their new bonnets in the gutter and departed in a perfect glow of happiness and philanthropy.

ADVENTURE XIII.

CLEG'S SECOND BURGLARY.

CLEG slept soundly on his bed within the whitewashed hut. The last thing he did the night before was to go to the bench where the men had been working, and bring an armful of the fragrant pine shavings for a bouquet to scent his chamber. And never did boy sleep better. It must be confessed, however, that the position of night-watchman at Callendar's, of which he had boasted to Vara Kavannah, was entirely a sinecure. For it was not till he heard the gruff voices of the men clicking their tools and answering one another in pre-breakfast monosyllables that he realised he had changed his abode. Then he stirred so sharply that the mattress fell off the trestles, and Cleg was brought up all standing against the side of the hut.

All that day he went about his duties as usual. He trotted to the newspaper office and distributed his roll of papers mechanically; but his mind was with the Kavannahs, and he longed for the time to come when he could, with some self-respect, go and gloat over the effects of his generosity. Doubtless there was a touch of self-glorification in this, which, however, he kept strictly to himself. But who will grudge it to a boy, who for the sake of a lassie has spent nearly half of his week's wage, and who knows that he will have to live on bread and water for ten days in consequence?

Cleg judged that it would not be advisable for him to go to Tinklers' Lands before noon. So in the meanwhile he betook himself to Simon Square to 'lag for' Humpy Joe, who had called him 'Irishman' the previous evening, at a time when, with his papers under his arm, Cleg was incapacitated for warfare, being, like Martha, much cumbered with serving.

But Humpy Joe proved unattainable. For he had seen his enemy's approach, and as soon as Cleg set foot within the square, he saluted him with a rotten egg, carefully selected and laid aside

for such an emergency. And had it not been for the habitual watchfulness of Cleg, Joe's missile would have 'got him.' But as it was, a sudden leap into the air like that of a jack-in-the-box just cleared the danger, and the egg, passing between Cleg's bare feet, made a long yolky mark of exclamation on the ground.

Being defeated in this, Humpty Joe looked forth from an end window, and entertained the neighbourhood with a gratuitous and wholly untrustworthy account of Cleg's ancestors. And Cleg, in reply, devised ingenious tortures, which he declared would be the portion of Humpty Joe, when next he caught him 'out.'

Thus, after tiring of this, the embattled belligerents separated in high delight and with mutual respect and good feeling, vowing sanguinary vengeance when next they should meet at Sunday School.

At last the time came for Cleg to feast his happy eyes upon the table which had been spread by his means for his friends the Kavannahs. But first he lingered awhile about the end of Davie Dean's Street, ostentatiously looking for a boy to lick, and throwing stones over the wall at the baker's fat watch-dog to make it bark. In reality he was making sure that none of his companions were in the neighbourhood, lest, with some colour of truth, they should cast up at him the capital offence of 'speaking to a lassie.'

At last the coast was clear. The only boy within half a mile had been chased under the protection of the great guns of his own fortress, being the vicinity of his mother's wash-tubs. Then Cleg dived quickly down to the cellar beneath Tinklers' Lands.

For the first time in his experience, the door was shut. Cleg had set his ear to the keyhole and listened. Then he put his eye there. But neither sense told him anything.

'Vara!' he cried softly, and set his ear against the floor. Cleg knew that the place to hear behind a door (if there is no danger of its being hastily opened) is not at the keyhole, but close to the floor. He listened, holding his breath. At first he could hear nothing; but in a little, a low sob at stated intervals detached itself from the cursory noises made by the other tenants of Tinklers' Lands and from the steady growl of the streets above.

'Vara!' he cried, a little louder; 'Vara Kavannah, are ye in? What's wrang?'

Still nothing came back to him but the mechanical sob, which wore his patience suddenly to the breaking point.

'They're a' killed,' said Cleg, who had once been at the open-

ing of a door, and had seen that which was within. 'I'll break open the door. And with that he dashed himself against it. But the strength of the bolt resisted his utmost strength.

'Cleg,' said a voice from within, very weak and feeble, 'gang awa' like a guid lad. Dinna come here ony mair——'

It was Vara's voice, speaking through pain and tears.

'Vara,' said Cleg, 'what's wrang? What for wull ye no open the door?'

'I canna, Cleg; she's here, lyin' on the floor in the corner. I canna turn the key, for she has tied me to the bed-foot.'

Cleg instantly understood the circumstances. They were none so unprecedented in the neighbourhood of Tinklers' Lands. Sal Kavanah had come home drunk, singly or in company. She had abused the children, and ended by tying up Vara, lest she should go out while she lay in her drunken sleep. Such things had been done within Cleg's knowledge—aye, things infinitely worse than these. And with his unchildish wisdom Cleg feared the worst.

But he was not Tim Kelly's son for nothing. And it did not cost him a moment to search in his pockets for a fine strong piece of twine, such as all shoemakers use. He always carried at least ten sorts of cord about with him. This cobbler's string was a special brand, so wonderful that Cleg had made friends with the shoemaker's boy (whom he loathed) solely in order to obtain it.

Cleg knew that the key was in the lock, but that the wards were turned clear, for his eyes, growing accustomed to the gloom, could now look into the cellar. He also knew that nine door-keys out of ten have a little groove at the end of the shank just below the wards. So he made a noose of the fine, hard cobbler's twine, and slipped it into the keyhole just as if he had been 'girning' sticklebacks and 'bairdies' in the shallow burns about the Loch of Lochend.

After a failure or two the loop caught and tightened. Then Cleg shook the string about with a cunning see-sawing motion, learned from his father, till he felt the wards of the key drop down perpendicularly. Then he took a long piece of stick, and, thrusting it into the keyhole, he had the satisfaction of feeling the key drop inside the door, and hang by the cobbler's twine. He eased it down to the floor, and found that, as is the case with most doors, the bottom of that of the cellar of Tinklers' Lands did not come quite close to the floor. It was therefore easy for Cleg to dangle the key a little till he could bring the end of it to the place where

the arch was worn widest. Then he took his hooked wire and pulled the key towards him. It was in itself a pretty trick, and was executed by Cleg in far less time than it takes to tell about it.

With the key in his hand, and in the other an open clasp-knife, Cleg turned the bolt back and stepped within. A terrible enough sight met his eyes, though not that which he dreaded. In the corner lay Sal Kavannah, with a pair of empty bottles tossed at her side, her black hair over her face, lying drawn together in a heap. Tied to the bed was Vara, bleeding from a cut on the head, and trying to cover her arms and hands from his sight. But Hugh and the baby lay in the bunk together, sleeping peacefully. It was upon poor Vara that the brunt of the woman's maniac fury had fallen.

Cleg stood stricken; but the sight of Vara bound with cords aroused him. He had the knife in his hand, and it did not take a moment to free her. But she was so stiff and exhausted that she fell forward on her face as soon as the straps were removed. Then, after Cleg had lifted her, he turned upon the sodden heap in the corner, and, with his knife glittering in his hand and the wild-cat grin on his face, he said, with a deep indrawing of his breath, 'Oh, if ye had only been my ain faither!'

And it was as well that it was Sal Kavannah and not Tim Kelly that had done this thing.

Now, in an emergency Cleg always acted first and asked leave afterwards.

'Come awa' oot o' this, Vara, and I'll bring the bairn and Hugh,' said he to the girl, when she was somewhat recovered.

'But, Cleg, where are we to gang?' said Vara, starting back.

'Never you heed, Vara; there maun be nae mair o' this frae this time oot.'

His manner was so positive that the girl gave way. Anything rather than abide with the thing which lay in the corner.

'Hae ye ocht that ye wad like to bring wi' ye?' Cleg asked of Vara, as he shouldered Hugh, and took up the baby on his other arm.

'Aye,' said Vara, 'wee Gavin's feedin' bottle.'

And she had to step over the sodden face of her mother to get it.

So the four went out into the noonday streets, and Cleg marched forth like the pipe-major of the Black Watch—than whom no king on earth walks with more dignity and pomp, when there is a big parade and the full band of pipers leads the regiment.

Cleg almost wished that Humpy Joe might see him and taunt him, so that on Sunday he might beat him to a jelly. But, as it chanced, the streets were deserted, for it was the very middle of the workmen's dinner-hour. So that the streams that went and came a quarter of an hour sooner and a quarter of an hour later were for the moment all safely housed; while those who had brought their dinners with them sat on benches in the shade, and took no notice of the small forlorn company passing along the causeway.

There was another way to the old construction hut at the back of Callendar's yard which did not lead through the main gateway, but entered from some waste ground, where only broken bottles and old tin cans dwelt.

The children passed safely and unobserved by this way, and in a little while Cleg had them safely housed in his own city of refuge. But Vara was in great fear lest some of the men should see them and turn them out upon the street. So Cleg shut the door upon them with the lock of his own devising, and started at a run to find Mr. Callendar.

(To be continued.)

IN CHALET LAND.

THERE is probably no better change to tired dwellers in cities, and no such rest to overstrained nerves—the disease of these wild nineteenth-century days—than may be obtained from a temporary residence in one of the mountain valleys of Switzerland. But the valley should be far enough from the trammels of civilisation to allow of perfect freedom, and the stay should, if possible, be a long one, for the charms of the mountain life do not reveal themselves all at once. The first thing apt loudly to assert itself is the absence of those ‘comforts’ to which we poor creatures of habit are so accustomed, but which, in a few days, we find to be quite unnecessary. Given good air, a glorious mountain view on every side, perfect cleanliness, sufficient eatable food, and good beds (always to be found in the simplest Swiss home), it is astonishing how little else is really required.

Last year, in a mountain walk in the Canton of Vaud, twenty-five miles from the railway line, I passed, on the outskirts of a large mountain village what seemed to me a perfect example of the ‘Chalet Suisse.’ To my sorrow it was let to a French family, upon whom we stole a march the following spring by securing it for ourselves at an early date.

These chalets are all built of plain white wood (there are, by the way, a few stone houses, but they look glaring and awkward, as if conscious they had no right to be there), and are capable of being washed, inside and out, with honest soap and water.

The poorer sort have their staircase on the outside, which adds much to their picturesque appearance; all have sombre overhanging eaves, from three to nine feet in depth. These are a wonderful protection both from the winter snow and summer sun. We have been surprised to find a room of south aspect perfectly cool in the dog days, for the sun, being high in the heavens, does not penetrate below the spreading eaves. This seems to show ingenuity on the part of the builder, for the same room in winter, when the sun is low, will catch every ray of warmth. Much taste is shown in the decoration of the exterior, where the skill of the native artist asserts itself in telling bits of coloured carving—red, blue, green, and violet, set off sometimes by a white background. There are, of course, the unfailing green shutters (the pastor’s

house is marked always by green-and-white shutters) and the large roomy square balcony, well protected from wind and rain, affording accommodation for the whole family, and serving often both as dining and sitting room. How one longs to see this friendly adjunct shared by the houses of our English poor! Our much-maligned climate would not prevent the enjoyment of a balcony, which is a real promoter both of health and pleasure. Yet, as a rule, it is the rich who enjoy this simple luxury, which, with a little enlarging of the mind (or shall we say the heart?) of the architect, might so easily be accorded also to the poor. Invariably there is a projecting shelf with a carefully tended row of flowers, and much effect is gained by this one row of brilliant colour.

In course of years the outside of the house is dyed by the sun, first yellow, then a golden brown, and finally it becomes almost black. A few are entirely grey. The latter shade, the peasants say, is the work of the setting sun, but I confess to finding this theory difficult to credit. The blending of the many shades on the undulating green of the mountain slope makes a most harmonious whole.

Each chalet has its store of wood for fuel, neatly stacked on the outside—for theft is unknown in this honest valley—and each bears a record, burnt or painted on the front, of the name of the builders, followed usually by the date of building and a touching prayer or invocation for the blessing of God on the house and its inmates, with sometimes an exhortation to lead pious and God-fearing lives to those who come after. The following inscriptions I copy from houses in our immediate neighbourhood. The French is at times old and difficult to decipher, at others too illiterate to copy at all.

1701. Dieu bénie cette maison, et tous ceux qui la posséderont. O Eternel, sois le conducteur de leurs saisons en paix, et leur donner bonheur, et puis la vie éternelle. Amen.

1792. (On a cattle shed.) Dieu nous conserve nos bêtes. R. M. A. F.
(On a house for summer only.) Etre Suprême! Dieu de toute puissance! protège ceux qui l'habiteront en été.

Par la grâce de Dieu, Pierre et Jehan Rossier frères ont fait bâtir cette maison, Dieu l'ayant III^e béni, et en chacune saison en paix.

1819. Par le secours divin, Jean Brincod a fait bâtir cette maison par Maître Moise Henchoz. Oh! mortel véritablement l'ami de ton Dieu et de l'homme, garde ses commandemens; alors le temps fera ton bonheur et l'Eternel ta félicité.

Les possesseurs du présent bâtiment sont exortés très-sérieusement à craindre Dieu, garder soigneusement tous ses status et saints commandemens, pour avec

lui vivre éternellement, car la vie est un chemin de justice, et la voie du sentier de celle-ci ne tend point à la mort. J. R. H. S. M. H.

1886. Que la bénédiction de Dieu et sa paix reposent sur cette maison.
L. R. E. R.

This brings me to the religion of these mountain people. The stern Calvinism of Protestant Switzerland, so hard and unattractive in the plains, is here much tempered and modified; and the simple villager, who has no outside distractions, lives so near to God and Heaven that one is constantly reminded of the extraordinary faith and devotion of the Roman Catholic peasantry of Tyrol and Bavaria. In this connection a saying attributed to John Bright often occurs to me, 'All good people are of the same religion.' But the peasant of Tyrol—from a long residence in his sunlit land, I am much attached to him—will lie and steal, for all his devotion. Be merciful, kind reader. It is his special temptation (I know it is not *yours*). My sympathy is with *him*, but with sorrow I own that my Protestant peasant of to-day is more upright both in word and deed. The most scrupulous truth and honesty prevail. A low, unvarying market price, a just weight, a fair wage. If a stranger try to bargain, he is looked at with contempt, not to say distrust, and a quiet, 'On n'a pas l'habitude de surfaire, Monsieur,' teaches him, we hope, his mistake. It is edifying to see the whole village turn out for church at nine o'clock on Sunday morning, climbing cheerfully a very steep hill—for, as usual, the ancient church is built on the highest available natural eminence, from which it picturesquely dominates the whole village—but the ascent is hard work for the sick and aged, who seem not to have been considered in the days of its construction. The children assemble in the afternoon for a 'Catéchisme,' or children's service, which is obligatory till the age of sixteen. The Holy Communion is celebrated four times a year, on two consecutive Sundays, when every soul in the district who has been confirmed attends, all attired in black, so that the effect is that of a funeral. The sexes are divided—men on one side and women on the other—and when the time for Communion arrives the men file one behind the other in long procession to the 'table,' at which they reverently stand with bowed head. The women follow, and the whole time the Bible is read aloud from the pulpit by the schoolmaster. The effect on a stranger is impressive and devotional. One may well be shocked by the bare ugliness of the interior of the church, and especially by the huge black pipe of

the stove, which passes, without any ceremony, clean through the east window. But the good Calvinist mind requires evidently no external aid to devotion, just as the Calvinist body is satisfied with the hardest of deal seats, which often have no backs at all. In the churchyard we found one English grave, quite overgrown with nettles. It is that of a young orphan girl, who died here seventy years ago, at the age of twenty-one. This poor little grave seems always to appeal to us, and we carefully tend it and plant it with flowers, and ask ourselves what was the sad history of 'Rose Hopkins,' and what brought her to die so far from her English home.

Agriculture is naturally the chief industry of these mountain folk. Neither the vine nor any edible grain will grow at this altitude—3,700 feet—and apples, pears, currants, gooseberries, and wild strawberries and raspberries are the only fruit, but the crops of hay are superabundant. The process of hay making is, owing to the dryness of the climate, much shorter than with us. The whole family turn out with the first ray of light to mow, the women also using the scythe, and there is little hired help. The next process is to 'fener' (throw the hay high into the air with a fork), and by the next day, with the help of a broiling sun, it is ready to be put into cock, and carried at once to the barn.

A large net, called a 'filard,' is spread on the ground, and an enormous amount of hay put into it. This is securely tied by the ropes of the net; then hoisted on to the shoulders of the head of the family. Like a tottering hay-cock he struggles to the barn—often a considerable distance—and then reappears for another load.

The production of cream, butter, and cheese is very abundant. One pities the poor cows, who, once or twice a year, are taken higher in the mountains or into the fields to graze, but who spend the rest of their lives in cramped little cowsheds, with no air save the opening of a window, which is considered amply sufficient for a supply of ozone. As the cow, however, is of a gigantic build and gives excellent milk, I presume no harm is done by this life of seclusion.

Cream and eggs are usually the only refreshment to be obtained by weary travellers, who, after hours of climbing, come upon a chance mountain chalet. A huge bowl of cream is produced, and to each of the party is given a quaint wooden spoon, with which they all dip into the same dish. These spoons are

well carved, and are often heirlooms in the family. As often as not payment is altogether refused, which drives one to the conclusion that, allowing for a large-hearted generosity, these 'montagnards' are not as poor as they look.

Milk is carried to be sold at the village *laiterie* in a sort of flat tin case, called a 'boille,' strapped to the back of the seller. The large flat cheeses he carries on his head in a quaint tray, with arms and legs, called 'un oiseau.' I use the *patois* of the country, which does not, we hope, aspire to be French. The elder women, besides the privilege of knitting socks and stockings for the entire family, have an industry all their own. They receive willingly the oldest dresses, petticoats, old linen rags—in fact every kind of 'chiffon'—with which they weave an admirable sort of washing carpet, which is very durable. The colours are well blended, and even at home this carpet would not be despised for what Maple & Co. call 'secondary bedrooms.' It is sold for about two francs a yard. I have not yet tried, but I am sure I should have much satisfaction in thus treading under foot my discarded town garments. Here one's dress is of the very simplest, and it is a question whether, in course of time, one might not, in that respect, become quite a peasant. Walking skirts and washing blouses are the staple dress for a summer visit, with something very warm and very woollen for the few days of excessive cold and wet which will occasionally drive us shivering indoors even in midsummer. We certainly cannot pretend to an equable climate.

The native refinement of the peasantry is wonderful, though of what we understand by the degraded term 'gentlepeople' there are absolutely none. Of Nature's gentlefolk there are indeed many. I wish I could introduce my reader to our friendly old landlord, who, with his worthy wife, lives in the lower part of our chalet. I took him at first for a gardener—a tall, spare old man, working in his shirt-sleeves, who received me with a gentle dignity and courtesy which would not disgrace an archbishop. He and his wife have no servants; they do their own work, and gather their own crops with but little help. Yet there is no more important person in the whole neighbourhood than 'Monsieur Durieu père.' He owns a fair amount of land, is president of the village, treasurer of the infirmary, head of the workhouse, and general relieving officer, so to speak. All these unpaid responsibilities call him much away, and are looked upon by his wife with

mingled pride and sorrow. She is much alone in consequence, and yet there is the consolation 'Mais oui, mon mari est indispensable au village.' Then there is the portly young banker—married to the richest heiress of the place—who milks his own cow and makes his own hay. The business of banking does not, apparently, absorb either his time or his energy, and it is amusing to see him, three times a day, patiently going, 'vers sa vache,' attending himself to the immured and solitary beast, who gives forth excellent milk, quite worthy of a lengthy inscription under which she lives. The banker's quiverful of sturdy little boys are an excellent testimony to the quality of the milk; and their manners, like those of every little urchin in the place, are delightful. Their interest in 'ces dames' is sincere and keen, and they never fail to take off their hats with the hearty 'adieu' which is the common salutation both for meeting and parting. Their bearing generally well conveys their own idea of a friendly equality not devoid of respect. Very upsetting to English ideas are the number of commissions given to our driver whenever we hire a carriage for a distant drive. We set out, of course, with a feeble notion that a carriage and driver, hired and paid for by ourselves, was, for the time being, all our own. But no! An ineradicable principle of mountain Switzerland is 'thrift.' If our driver can execute the commission it will save certainly a stamp, and perhaps the expense of a special messenger. So it is no uncommon thing for a woman to stop our coachman: 'My sister lives in the last house in such-and-such a village. Will you please give her my best love, and tell her, &c., &c.?' or some errand of a like nature. A boy pursued the carriage some distance one day with a watch to be given to his brother in some place which was on our way. Our leave is never asked, but we are expected to wait (and let us admit that we *do* wait) in the village street till the errand is satisfactorily executed. On the whole it does us no harm to have our insular notions upset, and we hope to return to England two wiser and less exacting women.

Not to give too *couleur de rose* an account, I will frankly own that one must go through a good deal to set up even the semblance of a comfortable English home under the circumstances. Our chalet, standing with a quaint little dignity in its little plot of white-railed garden, where peas, cabbages, lettuces, and old-fashioned garden flowers smile away in queer little rows in front of our sitting-room windows, our creeper-covered balcony, and

inside the dainty spotlessness of our wooden walls, *look* most inviting; but there is more to do, we find, than simply to lie down in our soft white beds. In twenty-four hours we discover that our two Swiss maidens think 'civilisation' the English for 'bêtise.' They know how to scrub and clean—in fact, the everlasting cleaning necessitated a strike on our part; for we could stand it no longer. But, in everything concerning the niceties of life, one comes to a blank wall of ignorance very hard to break down.

The laying of the table and waiting thereat are a mystery, which even now, after twelve weeks' trial, is scarcely fathomed. A friend, who laid her own table with some care, told me it was considered so mysterious a work of art that she used to hear her maid bringing in various friends and relations to wonder and admire.

We took our cook 'Céleste' entirely on the score of her 'devotion to our person,' to borrow a royal expression; but in a few days we felt anything but royal, her ideas of cooking being most eccentric. She would put the potatoes on soon after breakfast, let them boil a little, cool a little, and then boil a second and third time. Finally, they sat on the kitchen-table and degenerated into a tepid, sodden mass whose sole virtue was economy, for we could not eat them at all.

In self-defence I one day made a cake, and left Céleste to bake it. She let the fire out at least three times during the baking, and brought the cake twice to me on the balcony, remarking that we should be fortunate if it were done by to-morrow. As I had forgotten the butter, it is perhaps well to draw a modest veil over the result.

Our parlourmaid 'Rosine,' who does not sleep in the house, comes regularly, with broad smiling face, to shake hands and say 'Good-night' before she goes home. Swiss maids have no idea of tidying themselves and 'presenting arms' in the afternoon, as their English sisters would do. We invited friends to tea, and insisted on clean caps and aprons. No one *could* have looked more fresh and dainty; but just as we expect our tea-party, Céleste, with a laudable desire not to waste time, encamps outside the front door, and proceeds to polish, with many doubtful looking rags, a whole array of brass candlesticks. To our horror, we find our plate is also cleaned in this prominent position, for Rosine has never heard of a thief. Our boots, I regret to say, after some needful repairs, lived outside for half a day, in full view of the High Road. Perhaps Céleste's most trying performance was when

I confided to her my dress, from which she begged to clean a single grease spot. To my dismay, that afternoon I descried in the public washing-trough a black mass, a shapeless, melancholy pulp, which proved on investigation to be my decent black gown. I fear I was not much consoled by Céleste's remark, 'Du moins, c'est propre,' but I thanked her humbly, for she is soft-hearted and meant well.

After all, these are the smallest of minor evils when compared with all the rest, refreshment, and novelty we have enjoyed in our mountain retreat, and it will be a sad day when we must turn our backs upon our chalet home, to take up—cheerfully, we hope, and willingly—the responsibilities of our more burdensome English life.

AN OUT-OF-DATE REFORMER.

I.

THE little shop stood on the Glasgow Road, near the entrance to Drumsynie. It was, in fact, merely the front room of a house, one of a row, the others being occupied by weavers. There was no modern display in the shop-window—no sham heaps of raisins and currants. The upper part of it was fitted with shelves, on which were placed large jars of sweets, with sugar animals between them; the lower part held oranges and apples. For many years there had been over the door a signboard bearing the words—

WILLIAM GILLESPIE,

Licensed to retail Tea and Tobacco.

It was a frosty morning, the first day of November. At half-past seven William Gillespie stood outside his shop-door. He was a tall, thin-faced, beardless man. His fine grey hair hung straight down under the ancient tall hat which he wore. By his side stood his son, his only son, John. He was shorter than his father, and rather thick-set, but pale and delicate-looking. By his side stood a large carpet-bag, full to bursting, for it contained not only his library and his wardrobe, but a selection of provisions from the shop. The young man might have been nineteen years old. He wore a black overcoat, a good deal worn and two sizes too small for him, black cloth gloves, and a flat-topped Scotch bonnet.

So much might be seen by the light of a candle which Mrs. Gillespie, standing just within the shop-door, held in her hand. Outside it was quite dark, but for the reflection from the sprinkling of snow in the road.

No words passed between the three. All needful instructions and exhortations had been given. And, besides, Mr. Gillespie's heart was too full for words. The first step towards the realisation of the long-cherished wish of his heart was about to be taken. His son was on his way to college, to become a minister.

Soon the trampling of hoofs and the roll of wheels were heard in the stillness. Then the gleam of the coach lamps shone on the snow, as the coach turned the corner.

John seized his carpet-bag with his left hand, and gave his

right to his father. Neither of them spoke a word; it was not needed. Then John hurriedly embraced his mother. He had barely time to do so, when the coach—a truncated, low-roofed omnibus, drawn by three lean horses yoked abreast—stopped at the door.

‘Outside or in?’ called out the coachman.

‘Out,’ replied the lad. The fare was three shillings outside, four shillings inside; and that, of course, settled the question.

John handed up his big carpet-bag, and climbed up after it.

A minute afterwards, looking back, he saw the light still burning. His father was standing with his hat off, and his grey head bowed down upon his breast.

II.

John Gillespie did not belie his father’s hopes. He was steady and worked hard, attracting little notice, but respected by those who knew him.

Of course he was very poor. Often he would gladly have joined himself to the group of ragged lads who hung about the railway-stations in the hope of earning a few pence by carrying big portmanteaus. It was next to impossible for him to earn money; the poor student’s resource, coaching dull schoolboys, was not open to him. His clothes were too shabby, and he had no introductions. But he struggled through the winter somehow, and went home at the end of April with two unreadable volumes bound in white-and-gold, and with the college arms stamped on them, in the big carpet-bag.

Next November, when he returned to college for a second session, Gillespie was no longer a boy. He was beginning to look out upon the world, and form his own judgments of what he saw there.

What he saw did not please him. Perhaps he was a little soured by his poverty. At any rate, he looked on the ostentatious display of wealth made by the fat, good-natured citizens around him with something of a jaundiced and jealous eye.

In church matters he was even less satisfied. The services in the large city churches did not please the student accustomed to a bare simplicity of worship from his childhood. Organs, trained choirs, stained-glass windows, luxurious pews, multiplicity of hymns, with shortened prayers and sermons, and, above all, the custom of standing to sing and sitting at prayer, obtained every-

where; and these things were as smoke to his nostrils. It seemed to him that modern Presbyterianism was deeply tainted with the vices of prosperity.

And there was a special reason why young Gillespie took these things to heart. It was a fact, though he never spoke of it even to his most intimate companions, that he was lineally descended from Robert Gillespie, who had given his life for the good cause, having been hanged at the Grassmarket in the dark days before the Revolution. Yes, the blood of a martyr flowed in the young man's veins; and many a time did his head unconsciously raise itself, and his eye flash with a strange gleam, as he thought of it.

'What would my ancestor have said to all this?' he would think to himself, as he entered a fashionable church, and noted the signs of luxury around him, while the soft tones of an expensive organ filled his ears. 'Was it for this that Robert Gillespie, and many a one like him, suffered and died—that men might be free to worship God on soft-cushioned seats instead of a wet hill-side?'

These thoughts he locked up in his own breast. He confided in no one, or answers might have been given to his questions which might, in part at least, have satisfied him. Only to his father did he hint at what was passing in his mind; and the old man, delighted to find that his son was minded to walk in the old paths and was undazzled by the glitter of wealth and the softness of modern times, answered with a few emphatic words of approval.

And gradually the idea formed itself in the young man's mind that the noblest destiny conceivable would be to bring back Scotland to the principles of the Covenant—to restore to her the old simplicity of worship, the old fervour of faith, the old stern intolerance of compromise with evil. He felt convinced that such a reform was possible; that it was more through heedlessness and love of display, and careless good nature, that Scotchmen had strayed so far from the ways of their forefathers than from any intention of wrongdoing. They needed but a voice to bring them back to their allegiance, to fill their hearts once more with the old Puritan fire.

For seven years—during the whole time of his attendance at college and at the divinity classes—this idea haunted his mind; and there can be no great wonder that finally he began to think that he himself might be the divinely appointed instrument for the execution of this great task. Was he not marked out for the

work by his lineage, by his calling to the ministry, above all by his profound attachment to the memory of the Covenanters and to their principles? He well knew that he was neither eloquent, nor learned, nor endowed with a commanding presence. But he knew also that some, at least, of the great reformers had possessed no such gifts. He was conscious that their spirit was working within him; besides, as he told himself with a humility that was not altogether false, the less fitted the tool for the work in hand, the greater the glory of Him who used it. 'The treasure,' he would whisper to himself, 'is in earthen vessels, that the glory and praise may be of God.'

The years passed by, and in due course the Presbytery of Stonyford, to which John Gillespie owed allegiance, licensed him as a preacher.

The young minister's first sermon was preached in Drumsynie, in the little square church in which he had worshipped since his boyhood. Half the town, as it seemed, flocked to hear him. Some were attracted by a kindly interest in their young townsman; others were simply attracted by a desire of obtaining a little excitement in a legitimate way on that day of the week when excitement of any kind was hard to come by. A few, perhaps, came from the malicious hope of witnessing an ignominious breakdown. But if any of John Gillespie's hearers belonged to this category they went away disappointed.

The preacher seemed unconscious of the fact that the critical eyes of his friends and neighbours were upon him. He looked the congregation boldly in the face as he read out his text: '*I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.*' It was, in a word, a sermon in praise of the Covenanters; and it appealed both to the religious convictions and the patriotic feelings of the people. They listened with gratified pride while the clergyman reminded them that their own fields had been reddened by the blood of those who had fallen gloriously in the cause of civil and religious liberty; nor did they take it amiss when they were told in plain terms that they were but degenerate sons of these well-nigh forgotten heroes.

Mr. and Mrs. Gillespie, as they made their way out of the church porch, heard on all sides admiring comments.

'That was a grand sermon,' said one elder to another.

'Aye; a most powerful discourse. Mark my words, Tammas; that young man will rise very far.'

Old Gillespie's face gave no sign as these words fell upon his ears; but his heart beat with paternal pride, and he felt his wife's thin fingers tremble on his arm.

'Let us not be overmuch uplifted, Grace,' said the old man to his wife when they were out of hearing. "'Pride," ye ken, "goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." And yet,' he added with a sigh of content, 'he seems a gracious lad; and I am thankfu' he has found acceptance among the Lord's people.'

Gillespie was now called on to 'supply the pulpits' of ministers who left home, and to preach in vacant churches. And for a time his services in both capacities were in considerable demand. But before long people began to say that they were tired of hearing sermons about the Solemn League and Covenant, and modern declensions from that high standard. No matter what text the young minister chose, it was an absolute certainty that before the end of his sermon he would revert to his accustomed theme. Sometimes he would detect a smile on the faces of some of his audience when allusions were made to the great men of the past; but Gillespie never so much as dreamt of omitting a word of his message for any regard for the opinions of others. It was in vain that some of the older ministers hinted to him that it would be well to avoid the subject for a time. Gillespie received such admonitions with a stern and chilling silence. In his heart he despised such counsels as carnal and self-seeking.

William Gillespie was far too shrewd a man to be blind to the fact that his son's devotion to the cause of the Covenant was likely to prove a serious obstacle to his obtaining the main object of a young probationer's ambition—a kirk of his own. There happened to be a vacancy just then in the church of the neighbouring village of Craigfoot; and the committee who had the ordering of these matters appointed John Gillespie to preach there on two consecutive Sundays, in order that he, like his fellow probationers, might have a chance of obtaining a call from the congregation.

It was not an important charge, nor was the stipend a large one; but it was sufficient for the old man's modest ambition. He thought that if he could see his son minister of the little kirk at Craigfoot he could die content.

On the Saturday before John had to preach at Craigfoot, Mr. Gillespie left the shop in charge of his wife for an hour, and accompanied his son for part of the journey. There was no necessity to hire a conveyance, as the distance was only nine miles.

'John,' said the old man, when they had gone a mile or two on the way and it was nearly time for him to turn back, 'John, I have been thinking that it might be well for you to say nothing about the Covenanters at Craigfoot.'

The young man stood still in sheer surprise, and threw a strange look at his father; but his father kept his eyes bent on the ground and walked steadily on.

'It's from no want of respect for the persecuted remnant that I speak,' continued the old man; 'it's a mere matter of prudence. Folks are remarkin', John, that you should na harp sae much on ae string. There may be something in what they say.'

The speaker took a side glance at his companion. He was pale, and his lips were drawn in, with an expression there was no mistaking.

'Weel, I maun be turnin' hame,' said the old man, suddenly stopping. The minister stopped, and held out his hand.

'Good-day, father.'

'Good-day t'ye, John. Ye'll be hame on Monday?'

'Doubtless—if the Lord will.'

They parted, and the older man went homeward with down-bent head. He understood well that his son was censuring him in his heart for his worldly-wise counsel; and that nothing but respect for him as his father had sealed the young man's lips. And he could guess what sort of sermon the Craigfoot people would hear next day.

A few months after this Mr. and Mrs. Gillespie were sitting in the small room behind the shop that served for the family sitting-room. The shop was closed, for it was late; but they had no thought of going to bed. They were waiting for news. The election of a minister at Craigfoot was to take place that evening, and the Rev. John Gillespie was one of the candidates. There could be little doubt that he had much injured his chance of being called by the persistency with which he had appealed to the people to return to the purer and sterner religion of their fathers. But, on the other hand, he had won respect by his earnestness; he had the advantage of belonging to the neighbourhood; and his rival was no very formidable antagonist. There seemed a fair chance that John Gillespie would be called to Craigfoot. One of the Drumsynie people who had business in the little moorland village that day had kindly promised to wait there till the church meeting was over, and bring news of the result that same night.

So the two old folk waited, outwardly calm, but inwardly consumed with anxiety, their hearts beating at every footstep that passed their door.

Suddenly the door opened, and John himself entered. There was a strange gleam in his eyes.

'You've got the call, John!' cried his mother, clasping her hands together.

'No, mother. Mr. Thompson has been called by a large majority.'

The old lady let her hands fall in her lap. Then she covered her face and wept.

'What for do ye greet, mother?' asked her son, returning in his excitement to the homely word of his boyhood.

'I believe,' said old Gillespie, almost sternly, 'if you had taken my advice this would not have happened.'

The fire still gleamed in the young man's eyes.

'I know that weel, sir! Mr. Macfarlane told me I would certainly have got the call had I withheld my testimony. But is this a time, sir, when the wolves are preying on the flock, for the douds to keep silent? "Woe to me if I preach not the gospel," said Paul. And woe to me if I cease to mind this people of the solemn Covenant they have neglected and despised!'

There was an air of solemnity in the young minister's face and manner that awed his father. The old man felt as if the mantle of the reformers had indeed descended upon the lad. He no longer felt grieved, much less angry.

'Whisht, mother,' said John, going up to his mother and laying his hand kindly on her shoulder. 'Think ye that the mothers of the martyrs lamented for their children? No; they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for His name. And if I suffer for the cause, though it were but as the bite of a flea in comparison, you too should rejoice.'

Mrs. Gillespie looked up at her son's face in a sort of wonder. It was to her eyes almost as though one of the old martyr-prophets had risen again. But, for all that, the mother cried herself to sleep that night.

III.

It was not long after this that a trivial incident gave John Gillespie and his mission an altogether new value in the eyes of the public.

Preaching on his usual subject one Sabbath afternoon in a large half-empty church in Glasgow, he attracted the attention of a reporter who happened to be one of the congregation. There was something in the young minister's palpitating yet subdued earnestness, his tones of genuine entreaty, his self-forgetfulness—something, too, in his appearance, his thin white face touched sometimes with a flush of colour that told of constitutional weakness, his long, coal-black hair, his gleaming eyes and unconventional gestures, that riveted the attention of the pressman. Half unconsciously he took out his notebook, and began to make a few jottings. Incidentally the preacher remarked that just two hundred years had elapsed since the obscure but gallant company of moorland shepherds had made their stand against tyranny in Church and State; and that it said but little for their descendants that the anniversary was being allowed to pass without remark. 'Had the principles of the Covenanters,' asked the minister, 'perished out of the land? Or was it mere forgetfulness that caused their children to appear wanting in the commonest gratitude?'

The reporter thought he saw his way to some good copy; and next day, to the intense surprise of the enthusiast, the *Herald* devoted three-quarters of a column to his sermon. Not only so, but a short editorial called attention to the subject, and, with a mixture of seriousness and badinage, exhorted the public to build the tombs of the prophets.

The idea 'caught on.' Meetings were held, speeches were delivered, and money was subscribed for memorial churches, memorial windows, and memorial stones.

Nor was it forgotten that the first man to remind his countrymen of the claims of the heroes and martyrs of old to loving remembrance was the Rev. John Gillespie. Invitations to preach showered in upon him. It was recognised on all sides that he had a mission, and that he was succeeding in his mission. Even the minister's father began to think that something better than Craigfoot might be in store for his son; and he remarked to his wife that the ways of Providence in respect of that painful dispensation might hereafter be fully justified.

Nor did it appear that the young minister was in any way puffed up by his sudden popularity. If anything he was more reserved, more earnest, more utterly oblivious of worldly considerations and the opinions of those around him, than he had been

before. He preached to a thousand well-dressed sinners with as little regard for their prejudices or their social position as if they had been so many handloom weavers. On one occasion he stopped the service because, on his giving out the psalm, the loud tones of an organ (which, he had understood, should be silent for the day) followed his voice. 'If the carnal instrument were not dumb,' he said, 'he would be dumb.' The congregation yielded and respected him none the less—but they smiled at each other behind their psalm-books.

And when the wave of popular enthusiasm began to ebb, when invitations to preach before wealthy congregations and learned professors no longer found their way to the little grocer's shop at Drumsynie, Gillespie's spirit showed no sign of a corresponding declension. He became bolder, more intent than ever, more passionately bent on turning men's hearts to the Covenant, and bringing to some good effect the popular excitement which had spread over the country.

Alas! men were getting tired of the subject. Few, very few, responded to his appeals. The minister's father saw, with terrible distinctness, that the tide had turned, and that his son, brave and gifted as he was, had not profited by it. He foresaw the approach of the day when John, his hope and his pride, would become that thing of popular scorn—a stickit minister. John, meanwhile, went on his way careless of all things but this—that he might be instant, in season and out of season, to bring men's minds back to the inheritance they were neglecting, to persuade them to take up and carry on the work of their fathers. He became ever more self-contained, more engrossed by his great idea, more oblivious of the world. His mother was anxious on the score of his health, for even in summer he did not quite lose a cough which had troubled him during the preceding winter. Old people, too, occasionally told him that he was overtaking his strength. But the young man only smiled gently, and quoted the text, 'As thy days are, so shall thy strength be.'

IV.

It happened that about four miles from Drumsynie, just on the border line between the cultivated fields and the wild moorland, was the site of one of those skirmishes which occasionally took place in the reign of James II. between the Covenanters and the king's troops. Such actions were rare, for the upholders of the

Covenant, though brave and determined men, were scattered over a wide extent of country, badly armed, and without leaders. It was not without pride, therefore, that the men of Drumsynie pointed out to strangers 'the battlefield' of Blackmoss.

During one of the solitary rambles which were his sole recreation, John Gillespie conceived the idea of turning to good account the local enthusiasm for the nameless heroes who had made the hectoring dragoons turn and flee. The two-hundredth anniversary of the action was not yet past. Why should he not summon his fellow-townsmen to meet him on the anniversary day on the battlefield, and there, above the bones of their dead champions, pledge themselves to uphold the cause for which they fought? The day fell on a Sunday—so much the better. The occasion would be more solemn; there would be less risk of the intrusion of worldly counsels.

For the next three weeks the young minister seemed a new creature. He could sleep but little; he could hardly spare time for eating. Late and early he was at work, writing letters of invitation, arranging the plan of proceedings, and composing the sermon which he was to deliver on the great occasion.

The ministers of Drumsynie looked upon the project with a doubtful eye. They feared that the excitement of the gathering would tend to unsettle their flocks; and they did not believe that any practical result would come of the demonstration. Still, they did not care to oppose the project; and they all 'intimated' from their pulpits the proposed meeting on the battlefield of Blackmoss.

The day arrived—the 21st of October. The hour of meeting had been fixed for two o'clock, so as to allow the Drumsynie people to attend church as usual before setting out.

No sooner did John Gillespie and his father reach home after the morning service than they started for Blackmoss. It was a bleak autumn day, with occasional showers of rain mixed with sleet.

'It's a bad day for the meeting, John,' remarked his father, as he cowered under his old umbrella.

'Nay, father,' replied the minister, 'what matters a puff of wind, a few drops of rain? Besides, the rough weather will serve to win the corn frae the chaff. Better a few earnest, God-fearing men than a great crowd of mere hangers-on. Were not two and thirty thousand, save three hundred, turned back, when the Lord wrought salvation by the hand of Gideon?'

When the father and son reached their destination, they found a crowd of five or six hundred people, chiefly young men and women, scattered over the reedy ground where the battle had been fought. A long row of gigs and dog-carts lined the moorland road. One or two ministers, conspicuous in their black clothes and white neck-cloths, were in the crowd, and they came forward to greet John Gillespie and his father.

'We had better begin,' said one of the ministers, 'else the farmers will be thinkin' their beasts may take cold.'

A stone, some four feet high, with a worn inscription, marked the precise spot on which, two hundred years before, the Covenanters had made their stand. A single iron rail, about two feet from the ground, guarded it from injury. To this stone the ministers, accompanied by William Gillespie and a few elders, made their way; and the senior minister present gave out a psalm. Naturally he selected that which, according to tradition, had been sung by the Covenanters on that very spot two centuries before, as they awaited, pike in hand, the charge of the dragons:

In Judah's land God is well known,
His Name's in Israel great;
In Salem is His tabernacle,
In Sion is His seat.
There arrows of the bow He brake,
The shield, the sword, the war.
More glorious Thou than hills of prey,
More excellent art far.

As the strong, clear voices of the moorland folk swelled up into the wintry air, their hearts thrilled with the memory of the past. Here, where they stood, their forefathers had sung that battle-song, and fought as with ropes about their necks; over that rising ground yonder the proud Englishmen had come riding to cut down the heroic band. These brown moors and black peat-bogs had echoed the volleys of musketry, the crash of steel on steel, the shouts of triumph. It did not occur to any one there to ask whether the circumstances of the case justified an armed revolt. Nor did any remember the sour temper and impracticable tenets of the Covenanters. One sentiment filled the hearts of all present. They honoured the men who had made a stand against intolerable oppression. But, for John Gillespie, the political, the patriotic side of the question hardly existed. To him, the Covenanters were crusaders. Their cause was the cause of Christ. Their enemies were the soldiers of the Evil One. Men, looking

at the young minister as the psalm was sung, saw that his hands were clasped and his eyes tightly closed. He was in an ecstasy.

After the psalm a prayer was offered by the minister; and it was then time for John Gillespie to deliver his address. By common consent the post of honour was awarded to him, for he had been the moving spirit of the demonstration.

The young probationer began by offering a second prayer; then, giving his hat to one of the bystanders, he asked the people to accompany him in spirit to the scene which had been enacted there that day two hundred years ago. With true fervour he painted the distress and hardships of the Covenanters, the cruel penalties inflicted on them for the crime of worshipping God according to the dictates of their consciences, and the indomitable spirit which led them to meet for worship in lonely hollows among the hills, knowing well that the thumbscrew, the rack, and the gibbet might be the reward of their faithfulness. He then went on to speak of the meeting which had been held as on that day at Blackmoss. He pictured the approach of the troops, the hasty withdrawal of the women and children, the fruitless summons to surrender, the charge of the dragoons, the volleys with which the charge was met, the floundering of the horses in the boggy ground, the counter-charge of the Covenanters, and the flight of the enemy.

To all this the crowd listened with keen attention. The biting wind swept by them unheeded; even a few flakes of snow, the first heralds of winter, passed unnoticed.

But when the orator passed to the second part of his discourse, and dwelt on the signs of degeneracy that were to be seen on all hands, the interest of the audience began to fall off. When Mr. Gillespie asked in tones of passionate indignation what would have been the verdict of the Covenanters upon many of their social and religious customs; when he asked bitterly whether they were prepared to suffer, not only ignominy and persecution, but death itself, for the sake of the Covenant, he evoked no answering enthusiasm. A practised orator would have known from the wandering looks and restless movements of his hearers that he was tiring out their patience. But the young minister was too full of his subject to note these signs. He was intent on one thing—awakening the people to a sense of their backsliding, and inspiring them to pledge themselves to a renewal of the Covenant.

Alas! The more earnest he became, the more vigorously he upbraided, persuaded, and entreated, the more weary became the

people. They were tired of standing, chilled, and disheartened. Several of the farmers, whispering to each other that 'it never wad dae to let the beasts get a cauld,' slipped out of the crowd, mounted into their dogcarts, and drove away.

The senior minister, after vainly attempting a friendly interruption, beat a retreat, and one of his colleagues, after a few minutes, followed his example. By imperceptible degrees the crowd melted away, till only about a third of the original number, chiefly consisting of lads and young men, remained.

John Gillespie seemed to be unaware that his hearers were dispersing. Only when his voice began to fail him did he see fit to draw to a conclusion.

By this time a cold, drizzling rain was falling; but the speaker did not know it. He was prophesying the speedy triumph of the cause.

'Aye,' he said, 'from one end of Scotland to another the sound has gone forth. Men have heard it; they are hearkening. They are considering. Speedily they will come to the conclusion, as their fathers did, that these things must not be; that popery and prelacy must no longer stalk unabashed throughout the land; that the marks of Antichrist must be removed from amongst us. Soon our cities and chief towns shall see, as of old, gathering multitudes come together to swear allegiance to Christ and His Covenant. The blue banner shall yet be borne, as in former days, in the van of the Scottish hosts. Men will see and know that however the other nations of the earth may follow idols, we will be true to the God of Israel!

'And it is fitting, men of Blackmoss, that here, first of all, the ancient fervour should be renewed; the old vows repeated and confirmed. Here, where the servants of the Lord brought low the pride and the strength of carnal and bloody-minded men; here, where heroes shed their blood like water in defence of the truth, let us follow the example of our fathers, and renew their Covenant! Friends, take off your hats, raise your right hands to heaven, and repeat these words after me: "I promise and covenant with God and my fellow-countrymen, that I will do my utmost to root out of this land all so-called religion that is not in conformity with the Scriptures and the Westminster Confession of Faith."'

'Far too strong, brother,' whispered a voice in the speaker's ear. John turned on him like a flash. It was a minister who had

spoken. Indignantly Gillespie looked round for the other two ministers, as if seeking their support. They were gone. He looked at the crowd. Not a hand was raised. Here and there a smile broke over a broad, good-natured face. John Gillespie turned very pale. He had to wait a few moments before he could proceed.

Meanwhile the rain had changed to sleet. Already it seemed to be growing dark. The people were moving about, impatient to be gone.

‘At least promise this!’ cried the reformer: “I promise and vow to God and my country that I will resist to the utmost the carnal innovations that are now creeping into the public worship in our churches, such as instrumental music, singing of uninspired hymns, the reading of sermons, and other like novelties.”

A few hands, those of the older men remaining, were lifted; a few voices murmured the pledge. But the majority of the crowd, seeing the poor array of hands raised, gave a short laugh.

‘And finally,’ continued Gillespie, ‘promise me solemnly, before God and each other, that you will follow the steps of your fathers in yet one other matter. Say, “I promise and vow that I will shun, and do my best to abolish, the ungodly and worldly amusements, such as were abhorred of the Covenanters—as fairs, drinking customs, games, and diversions.”’

This time not a hand was raised. There was an instant of silence. Then a shout of coarse laughter. The rowdy lads in the crowd, tired and out of temper, were delighted at the fiasco.

‘Ye’ll be the only Covenanter yersel’, Jock!’ cried a half-witted man in the audience; and again the young men laughed.

John Gillespie was trembling from head to foot, white to the lips with passion. It was not the personal insult that moved him, but the fact that the Covenant had been put before the this people and they had rejected it. It was to him as if with his own ears he had heard them shout for Barabbas.

‘Woe unto you!’ he cried, turning on them in his wrath. ‘Woe unto you, ye sons of Kedar. Sons of Kedar, do I say? Sons of Belial I might call you! For you have heard the truth, and you have not received it. *You*, the sons of the Covenanters! Nay! ye have no part or lot with them. Ye are on the broad and wide road that leadeth to destruction; ye——’

Here the young minister was forced to stop, for some unmannerly fellows on the outskirts of the crowd began crushing against those before them, so that those nearest to the speaker

were, against their will, forced close upon him. Gillespie angrily remonstrated; his remonstrances were met with indignant denials. The lads on the outside, enjoying the fun, pushed harder, and began to laugh and jeer at the disowned leader. The rain and sleet fell faster.

It was over.

John's father got his son's hat, forced it upon his head, linked John's arm in his own, and led him away.

The wind was in their faces; and neither felt inclined for talk. Only, as they neared home, William Gillespie said gently—
'I doot the time for the Covenant's gone by, John.'

John looked quickly up at his father, but said nothing.

That evening the young minister was feverish and restless. His skin burned; he could neither read nor think coherently.

About ten o'clock he rose to go out—declared that he wanted air; but his mother persuaded him to go to bed. Then she brought him a hot drink, and tucked the blankets round his neck as she had done twenty years before. He lay still and passive as a child.

Next morning John did not come down to breakfast, and his father went up to call him. In a few seconds the old man came back with white, scared face.

'Grace,' he said, 'I doot something's come over John. He's no there, an'——'

He stopped, and sank into a chair, for a great fear lay at his heart.

The old people asked everywhere, but no one had seen their son; no one could give any tidings of him.

'The lad's fair cracked about thae auld-warld Whigs and Covenanters, as they ca' them,' said Thomas Mucklewham, the precentor, to his neighbour Andrew Wilson. 'I doot the puir chiel's no' a' there. But the auld man's clean dumbfounded. It behoves us to seek for the callant.'

Before noon a score of people were scattered over the countryside, searching for the missing man.

It was late in the afternoon before they found him. The minister was lying on the battlefield, dead, close to the memorial stone; one of his hands was touching it. His head was bare, and the snow lay in patches on his black raiment. They lifted him in silence, and carried him home to the woman that bore him.

Since that day there has been no anniversary sermon at Blackmoss. It is not likely that there will ever be another.

THE PLACE OF THE SACRED BO-TREE.

PLEASE you to mount the carpet and travel backwards through a matter of two thousand years. It is our will that you land upon the Dagoba of Thuparamaya, the relic-shrine built by a devout king in his city of Anuradhapura to contain the collar-bone of Buddha.

Behold the city spread beneath you—a great place of palaces and temples, of red-brick houses of the wealthy set amid fruit gardens, of squares bedecked with elephants and bulls in stone, of wide long streets lined with the bazaars, of narrow alleys squalid with Eastern garbage and naked children. Behold this city—fifty-two miles around its ring, sixteen miles across from gate to gate. Remember that mushroom London has yet to crawl forth from the forests and swamps which flank the Thames; and that amongst the hills where Edinburgh is to arise, a prowling savage hunts the beasts with a stone-shod mace. Realise that you are gazing down upon Anuradhapura of Ceylon in the height of its fame, and with the mists of twenty centuries brushed away.

The air is clear as nothingness, rich but blue overhead, and the colours which paint the city come to you vivid and undiminished. You glance over the whole wide ring of the boundary walls and remember that within them are penned three millions of human beings. You see them on the housetops, in the gardens, in the streets, and you hear the hum of them from the doorways and through the shuttered windows. The streets squirm like tortured snakes amongst the houses, divorced as far as may be from any cramped rectangular plan; the houses are built with infinite variety of form and colour; the dust rises in faint brown clouds from the feet of the traffic.

It is a city of processions, and every street has its cavalcade. A lady of the harem rides by in her shuttered palanquin, and the bearer-coolies shout to clear the crowd. A pearl-captain with a little leathern pouch follows, surrounded by his crew well armed, carrying the spoils of a year to the merchant who employs him. A religious procession of a thousand pilgrims and a score of ochre-robed priests treads on their heels. Then come more coolies with bales of silks from India-across-the-water, and bronze sword-blades, and wood for the lance-shaft sellers in the bazaar. The striped

awnings above reach half-way across the street, and under them the hard red brick of the houses gives out the heat soaked in through many centuries. But the units of the great city never rest. They are no worn-out race of Orientals. They are a people in their prime—they are full of a huckstering feverish energy.

In the main street of the city, a gorgeous thoroughfare of ten thousand houses, a little storm arises. A naked thief has pilfered from one of the merchant's stores displayed under a cavernous archway. A servant runs out to seize him, and the fellow struggles. Blood is shed. A guard of armed men presses up through the gathering crowds—clanking, stalwart, upright. They seize the thief, words are spoken, and the thief ceases to exist as an entire man. Then they take money from the merchant and depart to the place from which they came, leaving behind them a battered corpse in the roadway. The gaunt dogs are already beginning to arrive from down the alleys, and the carrion fowl collect above the housetops. It is an incident not uncommon. There are three millions of people in the city, and order must be kept.

A swarthy, reckless-looking fellow rolls up the street, kicks one of the pariah dogs out of his way, and proceeds to do business with the merchant who has just been despoiled. He wears a purple rag round his neck, battered armour on his trunk, and a broad axe slung by a thong to his wrist. He has got so thoroughly used to danger of every conceivable sort that ten minutes of assured safety would unnerve him. He is mariner, peddler, pirate—the last always when occasion serves. His home is in the distant sea-port of Tyre, in the little-known northern sea. He has brought with him a tiny cargo of dye-stuffs for disposal, and habit makes him plant his back against the wall and grip the axe-handle as he barbers.

Another religious procession with densely filled ranks surges by and blots the Tyrian and the merchant from view. This one goes to a temple, and the yellow-clad priests chant, and butter-fires flicker in the gloom before the image of the god. Buddha is great, and his worshippers devout. Throughout all the days of the year and through all the nights they cease not in their prayers and praises. The rest of the city may sleep, but not the priests. When one tires, another takes his place; and when one dies, a novice joins the priesthood. The man who scoffs at religion is a man yet to be born long centuries hence.

But the people are not without their lighter moments. In the squares and in the public gardens are platforms on which men and women dance and posture, and trained animals show their tricks, and jugglers make a mango tree grow out of a seed, or throw a rope into the air and climb up it and disappear into nothingness. There are feastings too, and races, fights with the knuckle-duster and tricks on the balanced pole; and those who come to watch, and those who stay to feast, pay in kind or coin according to what they get and according to their means.

There are baths, too, which are places for luxury and rest. They are placed in every ward of the city and are built for every caste and grade. There are baths built of marble and baths of homely granite. There are private baths in the houses of the king's brothers of burnished gold and ivory.

And over all, the soldiery of the king keep guard and order.

The king! Yes, a real king; a monarch such as has ceased to exist for many a weary century, and who lives in a palace appropriate to his state. You that stand on the high dome of the Dagoba of Thuparamaya, behold! This royal dwelling is built in a square, with sides 230 feet in length, and the uppermost storey is the ninth above the ground. On every floor there are a hundred rooms, and in every room four windows filled in with gilded trellis. Above all is a thing which one believed to exist only in the *Arabian Nights Entertainment*—a roof of polished brass. See the winking splendour of it under the blaze of sky, and guess at a millionth of the things that have passed beneath its shelter!

There is a procession of howdahed elephants coming up this moment—huge fellows without tusks, who plod on entirely careless of the crowds which scuttle from their path. A glittering squadron of cavalry attends them, and the banners tell that the pageant is made to escort in a visiting king from his halting-place without the city walls. The great bronze doors open, and he passes into the palace, and the doors clash behind him as they have closed on the heels of mightier than he. Hiram of Tyre (in earlier days) has sent an embassy to that palace, and with him was a hook-nosed man who took back word to Jerusalem of 'apes and peacocks,' and excited a new avarice in *blasé* Solomon.

Dynasties might change—had changed—but that palace with its glitter of roof was destined to endure down eight centuries, and to house a king who was a real king. It was always the king who did everything, whose will was the people's law. One built

palaces, another bazaars; one spent his life in war, and another in breeding peacocks. King Prakrama it was who, for the better water-supply of his country, caused 1,470 tanks to be constructed, which were to be known as the 'seas of Prakrama' all down through the ages. But Oevenipiatissa the King (of 307 B.C.) was the most renowned of all, for he it was who set up the cult of Buddha, as the national worship, and who planted the sacred Bo-tree (288 B.C.)

The tree was started as a trivial budding slip. They brought it to him from far without his city of Anuradhapura, in a great procession which gathered pomp and numbers as it advanced. It was a cutting from the tree under which Gautama had become Buddha—a thing of indescribable holiness—a gift more precious than all the king's possessions. He honoured it fittingly. He built a temple of red brick for its attendant priests, and in the walled courtyard of the temple, on a triple platform of cunning architecture, they planted the little switch of wood.

The tree grew, looking like a banyan with branches which did not root, and it put forth heart-shaped leaves with long, attenuated points. The folk from India-across-the-water who came to do pilgrimage there called it Pipal; but the men who came in later years, after the manner of their islands, called the tree a sacred fig, or, when they wanted to be pedantic, wrote it as *Ficus religiosa*.

And now, you who read this, step from the carpet which has held you back fifteen centuries in the past, and look at Anuradhapura as it is in the current year of grace. You will see some evidences of those old scenes still around you; and for the rest you must wade through the 'Mahâwansa,' which is a metrical 'Baedeker' written in the Pali tongue.

The city has fallen upon evil times, and the decay of age has gripped all her bones. The king and his three millions of subjects are not, and the fierce-growing Singhalese flora has invaded even the sanctity of the temples. The great houses and bazaars are mouldering rubbish-heaps. The stone bulls and elephants peer from amid scrub that is hung with orchids. The king's palace itself shows only a bristling forest of sixteen hundred granite columns sprouting out from a wilderness of rubble. Of the great brass roof, who shall say into what melting-pots the plates of that have found a way?

The forest is the chief holder of the city now. Trees girdle the fallen images, and smother from sight the domes of the huge relic-shrines. Shrubs have levered down a milliard milliard bricks; rank jungle-plants have burst up the tooled stone causeways. But man has never lost entire touch with the place, and to-day he is regaining possession. A squalid native village has always huddled amid the centre of the ruins, and this is now beginning to glow with a newer life. The agents of the Crown Colony of Ceylon have it in hand. The great tank of Kalawewa, which for centuries had been a ruin, was in 1888 repaired after years of labour, and once more Anuradhapura has water flowing through her ducts. There is a Government rest-house, a British magistrate to punish the evil-doer, and police to spread the law of the land. On clear nights one can hear the scream of the locomotive whistle from the terminus at Matale. The age is utilitarian. Even dead Pharaoh is hustled from his grave to become a spectacle.

But one thing in Anuradhapura has not changed through all the weariness of time, and has not bent to heathen conqueror or bowed to that greater Vandal, the civilisation of the West. The temple of the sacred Bo-tree still remains, an oasis tilled by religion. The brick of the courtyard walls maintains its blush; the priests are in the same ochre-coloured robes; the tree bears leaves to a line the same as those it bore when King Oevenipiatissa sat on his throne of gold and ivory and precious gems. The peacocks are there too, as they always have been, to lend colour to the place with their living jewellery.

Only once in all its life of over two thousand years have the newer gods frowned on the tree, and that was in the October of 1887. Then it was that they sent a great storm and splintered off the main stem and threw it to the litter of the courtyard. The yellow-clothed priests with sorrow took the wood and cremated it with vast and mournful ceremony, and the cult of the surviving branches continues.

The tree now is hoary with years, and rests feebly on its crutched sticks, and is bound about the middle with many a girdle; but its heart-shaped leaves are as fresh as those it bore in that far mysterious past, and never for an instant do they rest. Unceasingly they circle and dance and quiver before the little monkeys on the wall, and the yellow-robed priests of the temple, and the tired pilgrims who do obeisance in the courtyard. They are never cut, never shaken; but when they fall to the ground, then

the devout take them as holy relics, and give what is due to the priests of the temple.

This is the year of our Lord 1895, and the Buddhist pilgrims have done reverence to every leaf which has fallen from that tree since 288 years before His birth. We know that the heathen is an erring man who bows down to wood and stone, but we do not always realise that his constancy is a thing we cannot match.

Two thousand one hundred and eighty-three years—one tree—one religion; think the matter out. It may bring understanding to other things which lie within that smiling, haggard, mysterious East.

THANKSGIVING AT THE FARM.

JOSIAH STARN had just finished a large and pleasing breakfast of buckwheat cakes and Jersey sausage—his own killing of pigs, his own risin' of buckwheat—and as, seated on tilted chair, he drew long whiffs from his corn-cob pipe, he allowed that Thanksgiving Day had opened well at Conshehochan Farm.

While he smoked, Catherine Ann, the wife, cleared away the breakfast things in rapid but absent-minded fashion. She had something to say to Josiah, but was puzzled as to how that something should be said. When the last crumbs had been swept up and the tablecloth put away against dinner-time, she broke her long silence with, 'Coming to service this mornin', ain't you, Josiah?'

A cloud heavier than tobacco-smoke settled on the farmer's face.

'I reckon no, Catherine Ann—not tu-day; no, not tu-day.'

'And why not, Josiah?' queried Catherine Ann, who crossed the room to where he sat, and flicked a bit of hay off his broad shoulder.

'Well, Catherine Ann, it's just this. I've got a feelin' as I'd like to spend this mornin' alone with Natur'. I warn't brought up strict-like in Church matters, as you was, and somehow I've of opinion I do a better thanksgiving out in the woods, thinkin' in my own quar way, figuring up all the Lord hez done for the farm and me during the past year. You and the children go to meetin'; I'll just meander 'bout and turn up at dinner-time.'

A look of disappointment settled on the woman's face as she replied: 'As you please, Josiah; don't get back later than two o'clock.' Then she left the room to get herself and the seven little Starns ready for meeting.

An hour later Josiah, from the kitchen-window, watched his family tramping churchward, and when the last of them had disappeared within the Methodist meeting-house, he turned and glanced up at the old clock.

'Golly! Why, it's half-past ten. I'll have to git a move on, or I'll be late.'

Five minutes later Josiah Starn was hurrying down the lane which led from his farm to the shore of Coon Lake. Ten minutes'

walk brought him to the lake and into the presence of four old friends, who were evidently waiting for him. These friends were Jake Holmes, Isaac Scattergood, Matthew Simpson, and Paul Jenkins. A large flat-bottomed scow was floating by the small landing-stage, and into this homely craft the five men hurried, pulling the boat out to the centre of the lake, at least half a mile from shore.

From the moment of meeting until the anchor was dropped the only words uttered had been a 'Morning, friend,' passed from man to man in most perfunctory manner. Soon, however, their tongues began to wag.

'Rig the table,' said Josiah Starn.

'Don't you boys feel the awful wetness of all this d——d water?' slyly suggested Paul Jenkins, a man whose gigantic frame suggested that its tenant was little affected by climatic conditions.

'Well spoke,' put in the clerical-looking party who answered to the name of Isaac Scattergood; 'draw that cork, Matthew; we'll liquor up as a starter.'

Five cheerful gurgles, five reluctant sweeps of as many rough hands over moist lips, followed, and then Jack Holmes, a man who, when he began to speak, always made you think of Moody and Sankey, pulled out a pack of cards; two minutes later the five old farmers were 'communin' with Nature,' that is, hard at work playing a stiff game of draw poker.

Coon Lake was hemmed in on all sides by a heavy growth of pines, and so the old boat floating on its surface was exposed to no disturbing wind. Indian summer, too, had taken all the chill out of the clear November air, and far above, from out of a cloudless sky, the sun shone down with a suspicious touch of kindness and sympathy on the little party of gamblers. And small wonder. The sun had looked upon many a less inviting picture. For the Thanksgiving party on Coon Lake was a jolly one. Smiles danced across wrinkled faces; laughter deep and husky came free and often; occasionally a hat was tossed high in the air as some bit of good luck kindled farmer enthusiasm. For as the spirit-line fell in the bottle of Jersey-lightning, it rose proportionately in the frames of the Jersey farmers: and soon the game waxed fast and furious.

But all happy times have their end, and two o'clock grew painfully near. Josiah Starn had been playing from the start in bad luck, his pile of silver dollars was low. The evangelical-faced

Holmes was likewise out of ducketts; while Matthew Simpson, who seemed to have studied up the game since their last meeting a year ago, had scooped in about all the money at the table.

'Last pot,' cried somebody, as Matthew Simpson shook the papers around. Nobody seemed particularly pleased with their cards. Josiah Starn, however, was conscious of a sharp 'hunch,' and that 'hunch' had always, in times past, meant big and sudden luck for Josiah. He took the hint of the fairy, and held up a four, five, and seven of diamonds, drawing two cards.

Scattergood modestly confessed he already held three aces; he'd take two cards, kings preferred.

Holmes 'allowed he'd be d——d if he wouldn't buck agin Providence and old Scattergood by drawing four cards to an ace.'

Paul Jenkins said—and he spoke with considerable feeling—'that on any day in the year but Thanksgiving he'd just lay down his five cards and swear, but, being as it was Thanksgiving, he'd buy a card and try to fill a wall-eyed straight.'

Matthew Simpson 'called the boys to witness that he'd always stood pat on the last hand in the last Jack-pot on Thanksgiving Day. He'd got too old to make any new rules, and so he'd take his chances with the papers he now held.'

There was a moment of silence after the draw, as each man skinned his cards and tried his hardest to look disappointed.

Josiah Starn opened the betting. 'I've got nothin',' he plaintively remarked, 'but five cards of doubtful value. But as a neighbourly act I'll start the music for two dollars.'

Paul Jenkins then said 'he'd been a ass' not to follow his first idea, and swear before he paid a dollar to draw cards, as swearing was all he could do now. He dropped out.

Scattergood, who had frankly confessed to three aces before the draw, now complacently observed, 'I caught that pair of kings, and the least I can do, sitting behind an ace-full, is to see Josiah Starn's two dollars and rise him a cool ten.'

Holmes, who hadn't done much talking before the draw, now merely said 'D——n,' and threw down his cards.

It was Matthew Simpson's turn to speak now—Simpson, the man who had stood 'pat' because that was his rule. Josiah Starn and Isaac Scattergood, the only men left in the game, eyed Matthew Simpson suspiciously as he toyed with his cards, and seemed in doubt whether to bet or throw them in the discard. At last he came to a decision, and, speaking very slowly, said,

'Boys, we are all old friends, and this is a day of thanksgiving. I'd orter put this hand down—drop it sudden. That would be good poker. But I ain't playing poker just now, I'm playing friends. I don't like to quit a head, and so to distribute my winnings I'm agoin' to see Starn's two dollars, Scattergood's ten dollars, and tip the pot a cool one hundred.'

Once more it was Josiah Starn's turn to speak. An expression which told of deep feeling, but a perfect resignation to the inevitable, brightened, if it did not beautify, his rugged features. And as he spoke his old friends were conscious of a new dignity in his words and tones. 'Boys,' he began, 'I've long been thinking of giving up farming and turning missionary. And when I devote myself entirely to my fellow-men I ain't goin' to want no kind of property to worry about. Now this particular hand, in this yer particular game, on this particular pious day, gives me a chance to dis-tri-bute all I've got to my best friends in a way that won't make 'em feel it charity I gives. A follerin' this idea up I'm going to do a bluff. There's Scattergood's rise of ten dollars, that uses up all the silver I've got left; Simpson, you've always said them two Alderney cows of mine would be dog-cheap at one hundred dollars. My old sorrel horse, Tom, with cart and harness, is good for, say, sixty dollars; the brindle sow and her seven sucking pigs is good any day for twenty-five dollars; then there's three ploughs and a new harrow—well, let them go for twenty-five dollars more.'

Josiah, as he spoke, put all these items down on a piece of paper, added up the total, and then continued: 'Them goods and chattels figures up two hundred and ten dollars, and here they all goes into this distribution-pot. That sees your rise of one hundred dollars, Simpson, and lifts the pot about one hundred and ten more.'

Scattergood read the due bill over carefully, fingered the money a bit nervously, and at last remarked, 'Two hundred and ten dollars to call? That's kinda steep! My ace-full ain't got no chance. It will be Simpson's money, sure. But Simpson's cut out for a rich man; I ain't. He'll get all my money sooner or later, and to make it sooner I'll call. I'm out of coin, but the potato-crop on my forty-acre field is good for at least two hundred and ten.' And Scattergood scribbled on an old card, 'Sold my potato-crop on forty-acre lot for two hundred and ten dollars;

received payment in full.—Isaac Scattergood.' This due bill he placed reluctantly in the pot.

Matthew Simpson said 'he'd call that rise of Josiah Starn's by putting up sixty dollars in cash, and a due bill for his Hamiltonian colt, worth fifty dollars.' And then he turned to Scattergood, and asked, 'What can you show, boy; I know you've been lying about that ace-full.'

'I display four queens,' calmly stated Scattergood.

'No good,' came quickly from Matthew Simpson. 'Four aces here;' and then he made a move as if to draw in the pot, but checking himself, as a matter of idle form, he asked the thoughtful Josiah Starn, 'Anything to say, Josiah, before we close the game?'

Josiah passed his hand across his eyes as if trying to bring his mind back from a long, long wander. 'Anything to say? What have I got? Not much, I reckon, but let me take another look.' Carefully he slipped the cards one over the other. 'Boys, it's nothing short of a downright miracle. Durn't if I hain't caught a straight flush. Seems as how the Lord didn't mean I should drop farming after all.' And then Josiah, after spreading his cards on the table, proceeded to draw in the Jack-pot. The silver filled two of his capacious pockets. This deposited in safety, he picked up the crop of potatoes from the forty acres of land; a Hamiltonian colt, thirteen hands high, warranted sound in wind and limb; two cows; one horse, cart, and harness; two ploughs and a harrow; and one sow and seven sucking pigs. Tucking this miscellaneous group into his waistcoat-pocket, he stood up, stretched himself, and said, 'Two o'clock, neighbours; we must pull in to the shore. I've promised to turn up at home for dinner. We'll have another go at this game next Thanksgiving.'

Catherine Ann Starn, looking anxiously from the kitchen-window, caught sight of Josiah five minutes before he reached home, and when the 'Nature-loving' farmer arrived he found dinner on the table, and seven hungry little 'Starns' all in their places ready to despatch a meal that had been slowly filtering into their stomachs, through their nostrils, for at least half an hour.

'A bit late you are, Josiah; come along!' briskly exclaimed Catherine Ann.

'Sorry, mother, but you know when I gets communin' with Nature I'm apt to forget the passage of time'; and with this gentle

but genial lie Josiah dropped into his armchair at the head of the table.

Catherine Ann, from behind the great turkey, looked at him interrogatingly for a moment, and then, in rather sharp tones, asked, 'Have you forgot all about saying grace?'

'Of course, of course.' And Josiah, with hand reverently held aloft, and in a voice trembling with emotion, said: 'For what we have received this day—received this day, O Lord! make us truly, truly, truly thankful.' When Josiah opened his eyes at the close of this thanksgiving he was startled to note that Catherine Ann was regarding him in the most peculiar manner; an expression rested on her face he had never seen there before. She wasn't angry—that he could see at once; on the contrary, she looked happier than she had looked since the day they were married. But she didn't volunteer any explanation as to the cause of her joy, and Josiah had been a married man too long to ask questions. Josiah noted, however, when his plate of turkey came round that he had been given a double helping of onion-and-bread stuffing—one of his weaknesses. Now in general Catherine Ann was rather close with her onion-and-bread stuffing: first, because it was so useful in making up dishes for the rest of the week; second, when Josiah ate two helpings of stuffing he always kicked at night, and Catherine Ann had got over being young years and years ago. Josiah noted this sign of popularity with the old lady, smiled in acknowledgment, but discreetly held his tongue. Catherine Ann's good-humour naturally put the whole party in happy mood, and Thanksgiving dinner was unanimously voted a grand success.

When the plum-pudding and mince-pies had all disappeared, and the children turned into the kitchen, where their chatter would not disturb Josiah, Catherine Ann came over to where her old man was sitting, and, bending down, kissed him, whispering as she did so, 'You've made me very happy to-day, Josiah; and very, very proud of you am I this Thanksgiving night.'

'How's that, Catherine Ann?'

'I've never done you justice,' continued his wife. 'Somehow I never could believe you had the true religious spirit. But no man without that spirit could have put the 'onction and the fer-ver you did into your grace to-night. Forgive me, Josiah, for my hasty judgment. I did you a injustice.'

Josiah placed his big right hand over his eyes, as if in prayer.

But he wasn't praying ; he was thinking—thinking of Coon Lake and that straight flush. At last he broke out, 'Jumping at conclusions is allus resky business, Catherine Ann.'

'I know it is, Josiah, and I won't do you a onjustice again'; and then Catherine Ann hurried off to quell a disturbance which had evidently broken out among the little Starns. As she passed out of sight Josiah, with a broad grin on his homely face, muttered, 'There's two ways of taking that last speech of mine 'bout jumping at conclusions ; Catherine Ann—God bless the old girl!—has taken it the right way. I'll buy her that ten-dollar Bible, with pictures with all the 'postals and prophets in it, next time I go to town, and, d—— me, if I ever play poker ag——!'

But here Josiah Starn stopped talking, and began to snore in good old farmer fashion.

THE LAND OF THE BANDIT.

ONE should approach Ajaccio in the fag-end of a gale to be fitly impressed by an introduction to Corsica and the Corsicans. Moreover, the gale must be from the south-west, so that it may chevvy the waves from the quays of the town with right good will. You will then see nothing of the hinder mountains, which are the glory of the place. A thick grey brume, darkening to black, will be heavy on the hills and slopes, and from out of it on both sides the slate-coloured lines of the shore may be seen sprawling towards the water, with faint pencillings of an intense green. The white dots dispersed amid the green are sepulchres.

For my part, in future I will stay aboard rather than go into the strife of a getting ashore with the weather in such a plight. It is nothing less than a demoniacal scene. The heavy swell dashes the crowd of ferries one upon the other, and all against the ship's side; the Ajacciot boatmen scream and threaten each other, and grab with rude hands at the legs or arms of the passengers descending the ladder at the peril of their lives; the ship's officers menace the ferrymen with pains and penalties of an indefinite kind if they do not keep aloof; the lady passengers are only deterred from swooning with terror by an overmastering anxiety about their skirts and the disposition of their various packages and bags. It is a toss-up whether one is to be drowned or crushed to death between one barque and another; and now and again a big wave glides into the middle of the hurlyburly, and gives boatmen, ship's officers, and passengers a hearty douche from head to foot.

Late in the evening, after a meal of trout at the Hôtel de France, I strolled up and down the granite quayside in the teeth of the hurricane, which had revived. The flying spume of the waves lit the water like dull lamps. Suddenly there was a cry from the far end of the pier. A woman came rushing along with words that soon gathered many Ajacciots around her. 'Where is he?' they asked. 'Come,' said she, 'and you, too, will see it, *Dio mio!*' We followed her to a sheltered nook, where the back wash of the sea eddied gloomily to and fro between an angle of the quay and the pier, and at her bidding we stared hard into the dark Stygian pool. For a moment there was nothing to see

save the agitated sliding of the water.' Then a pallid face shone out at us, like the reflection of a veiled moon, and a tumult of shouts broke forth.

For aught I know, this poor drowned soul was one of my fellow-passengers from Africa sacrificed to the fury of the Ajacciot boatmen. We did not recover him, though an hour was spent with ropes and torches in the effort. Twice or thrice the dead face glided to our feet, and seemed to look at us reproachfully, but the current quickly carried it off again. The women were hard set to keep one stout-hearted fellow from diving, clothes and all, into the water to its rescue. They adjured him, for his family's sake, to forbear, and clutched him by the arm; nor were they frightened by the curses with which he rewarded them. At length, however, it seemed futile to tarry, and the drowned man was left at the mercy of the sea. The journal of the following day made a note of the incident, hard by its paragraph celebrating the capture of the bandit Calzaroni, 'who has put the police at defiance since 1883 for a murder with which he is charged.'

Ajaccio is a town of high, small-windowed houses and much grime. It would smell very foul if the smoke of the herby brushwood from the mountains, which the Ajacciots use for their fires, did not sweeten the air. Of course it is not all like this, but the characteristic part of it is. Its boulevards and new thoroughfares are as Parisian as French contractors can make them, and, though clean and bright enough, seem out of touch with the dark faces, dark velvet jackets and dark history of native Corsica. Bonaparte's stern countenance harmonises better with the place.

The house where Napoleon was born is not nearly as pleasant as his house of captivity in Elba. Nowadays, of course, its glory, if it ever possessed any, has completely vanished. It is a tall building, with a trivial little patch of greenery in front of it, railed in, and looking as depressed as a London city graveyard. The faded gilt eagle upon a stave in this rusty garden seems a mocking indication. There is, further, a brief inscription upon the wall, telling of the custodian who, for a franc or so, will fetch the key and show the house. *Sic transit*, &c. However, it will never do to be even philosophically lachrymose in the presence of the portly dame who proves to be the custodian in question. She has the air of one with good store of francs; and well she may have, for the visitors hither are so many thousands per year, with

now and then a crowned head or the president of a republic among them. Yet her office is no sinecure; she laments the lateness of the hour at which certain of the steamers travelling between France and Algeria call for a brief interval at Ajaccio. Sometimes it is ten o'clock when they arrive; sometimes twelve or one o'clock. But, whatever the time, the rat-tat-tat duly sounds at the door, and voices disturb the silence of the night, demanding to be shown the Great Napoleon's house.

One must walk through these rooms of the flat occupied by Carlo Bonaparte (Napoleon's father) with a good stock of faith and imagination if one wishes to come profitably out of the expedition. I suppose about a tenth of the custodian's tales may be true. She declares the chairs with the faded and worn yellow silk seats and broken backs are veritably Bonaparte furniture; and that Napoleon himself, as a child, tumbled and played upon this or that disembowelled sofa. The pretty little cabinet in the chamber called Napoleon's study is vouched for as the one upon which he wrote his school exercises as a boy. His bedroom (some twelve feet square, floored with red tiles) contains an aged four-poster, three ragged armchairs, a mirror, and an old mahogany chest of drawers. In this room the other year, when the President of France was in Ajaccio, the journalists of Paris passed many hours, night and day, writing inspired articles. The sedan-chair is shown in which Madame Letitia, the mother, used to journey to Mass, and in which they carried her home from church one day that she might give birth to Napoleon himself. It is a worm-eaten relic, with the leather peeling off it. The bedstead itself, upon which Napoleon entered the world, stands nude and dislocated by the wall. In the reception-room of the suite there may be a faint echo of the music and prattle and shuffling of cards which went on there a century ago. But one must tarry awhile to catch it. The tuneless spinet and the mirrors and chairs now peopling the chamber, like ineffectual ghosts, do not help one very much.

Spite of the tales that are told about him as a child, one may assume that Napoleon was but a commonplace little boy when he trod these boards and flags. We know that he objected strongly to the water with which the priest baptized him, and we know that he had a temper of his own. But for the most part it is futile to prattle about the childish traits which foretold the man of infinite ambition and success in the after time. There is not

much historical backbone in material of this kind. Nine Ajacciots of every ten in the present day know full well that if they had Napoleon's chances they would go as far as he went. Their demeanour betrays them. It is the *ne plus ultra* of pride and self-reliance. One would have liked to have heard what Ajaccio said of Napoleon when the news of Waterloo and St. Helena reached them. Other Corsicans besides Pozzo di Borgo had ere then formed a mean opinion of their great countryman.

Nothing is so suggestive of the character of the Corsican as his manner of burial. In the suburbs of continental cities you find sunny little taverns or vine-bowered retreats for the drinking of wine. Here you discover nothing but tombs. The Corsican will not, if he has but an acre or two of landed estate, lie in a cemetery like a continental. It is for his executor to inter him in a corner of the property or in the middle of it, and build a little domed chapel over his remains. Perhaps two or three cypresses are planted round about him, or the vines are trailed to form a shady arbour by the wall. I have seen onions and potatoes growing in excellent rows close to the right of the sepulchre. What does it matter? The dead man cannot hurt the crops, nor is it so very barbaric to eat the grapes which hang their clusters over his body. To these little wayside or field tombs the friends of the deceased, if they love him, come periodically to pray for his repose or to seek fresh stimulus in vendetta.

Some think that the vendetta is now little more than a legend in Corsica. It is quite otherwise. The police reckon the number of bandits in the forests by hundreds. Since the Franco-German war lawlessness has increased by great strides in the island. From the magistrates down to the peasants, all find it to their profit to run atilt against the immaculate figure of ideal justice. The man who pays his taxes or any other dues must be either very rich or very simple. The wronged Corsican who trusts to the law to right him so as to satisfy his own exacting proud heart is sure to be disappointed. Killing is still less of a crime here than anywhere else in the world, and the doctrine of blood for blood is taught to babes. Not long ago, a Corsican priest of the Catholic faith, in a complimentary address to President Carnot, used the phrase having 'hatred in the heart' as if it were a virtue to hate. In truth it is so in Corsica. The man who has no feud with another is reckoned but a pitiful fellow. He is regarded as a friendless man would be regarded elsewhere.

This needs a little understanding. Not every visitor who spends a week or two in the Island, staying in hotels, conversing only with those who talk hybrid English or French, the official language, and travelling only upon the national roads by railway or postal diligence, can get at the root of the matter, or even see much of the stem that grows from the root. What if four peasants out of five that one meets in the country have a gun resting upon their left forearm and shoulder, ready to swing to guard at a moment's warning? It is for the game, no doubt, and equally without doubt each man has a licence to carry arms? Not a bit of it. In 1886 only 335 persons in all the island took out a permit to shoot game, and 13,000 or 14,000 sportsmen were abroad in the bush. Their quarry, however, was and is of different kinds. Some are concerned only with men, and you may thank your stars when you meet them that you are not on their list. It is not without good cause that the Corsican gendarme is allowed to reckon his time of service in Corsica as so much active service in the field. He has his work cut out for him here among the dense scrub of herbs, heath grown to trees, myrtle, lentisk, and brambles, where the mountains spring abruptly, and among the snow-peaks guarded by precipices and narrow defiles, and pierced with caverns, the secret of which is kept tenaciously by one generation of bandits after another. All the time he is afoot in the scrub it is as if he were upon a battlefield; but with this distinction, that here his enemies are better able to take him unawares. A right and left shot from a double-barrelled Lefauchaux may lay two gendarmes dead in one minute, and their bodies will rest for many an hour where they have fallen.

Some of my readers will have heard of the bandits Bellacoscia, who reside at their ease in the picturesque gorge of Pintica, on the side of Monte d'Oro, above the town of Bocagnano, some twenty-five miles from Ajaccio. They have lived here since 1850, and always in defiance of the law. Their history is interesting, if only because it tells us how powerless France has shown herself to suppress the Corsican scourge of banditism.

So long ago as 1848 Antonio, the elder of the two brothers who carry the nickname of Bellacoscia (literally 'a fine leg,' which they have so often shown to the pursuit of the law), committed his first blood-crime. He shot the mayor of his commune because the honest man refused him a false certificate of exemption from

military service, and, further, demanded rent and taxes from him as a settler upon communal land.

This murder did not disturb Antonio's peace of mind very much. He did not even let it interfere with a course of rude love-making which was in progress, and he became impatient both with the father of the girl and the girl herself. One night, therefore, he and three other bandits assailed the house of his beloved, and summoned the father to deliver her into their hands. Objections being made, the father was seduced outside the house, instantly gagged and roped, and carried off to a cavern in the Pintica. An attempt at rescue on the part of a more acceptable suitor for the girl, accompanied by two friends, resulted in their capture also. They were detained for a while, but at length Antonio let them all go, his rival swearing solemnly to renounce the girl, and her father swearing to give her to the bandit. The oath was, however, disregarded, and on April 30, 1850, the marriage took place. On June 27, 1850, Antonio killed the husband, and again pressed for the hand of the unfortunate young widow. But the girl and the father and all the household straightway left the district, alarmed for their lives. Shortly afterwards Antonio killed another man. He had a grievance against a certain youth whom he charged with compromising his sister. The youth refused to marry her. A blood-feud was the result, and a victim fell in an ambuscade, though, as it happened, not the intended victim.

Since then Antonio and his brother Giacomo have resided in Pintica, and always with their lives in their hands. Their fastness is wellnigh inaccessible without one of the initiated for a guide. The town of Bocognano, about four miles distant, is at their feet. The citizens are controlled by them in an extraordinary manner. They dare not elect a mayor or any other functionary except with the sanction of the Bellacoscia. A few years ago the bandits were judicially condemned for using force in the senatorial elections. But one sentence more makes no difference to them, and their candidate is always successful.

They, with their wives and children and certain relatives who find it convenient to live in seclusion, make up a population of about thirty souls. There is never, therefore, any lack of sentinels in the gorge. No one can approach within a mile or two without being seen. The houses of the bandits are strong, and adapted to stand a tight siege if need be. But the bandits themselves

rely for defence more upon their moral influence over their neighbours. The signals that pass between them and Bocognano keep them posted in the doings of the world, and especially such as concern them. As a last resort there is a certain cave, the secret of which is well kept, and thither by a fearsome track athwart the porphyry steeps of Monte d'Oro, they can betake themselves in perfect security.

Why not, it may be asked, send a column of soldiers against the Bellacoscia, and starve them out? Pintica ought not to be impregnable after Badajoz and Sebastopol. In effect it has been tried. In September 1886 no fewer than a hundred and eighty-six armed men assailed the gorge and blockaded it. Of course it surrendered in time. But meanwhile, where, think you, were the Bellacoscia? Safe in the house of a certain mayor of a village, one of the creatures of their own election. When the soldiers at length withdrew, the bandits reoccupied Pintica; and there they may still be found.¹

Further, they have had several pitched battles with the gendarmes, in which they have been enabled considerably to increase the dole of lives for which they are accountable; and they have sent bullets through the heads of divers unfortunates whom they suspected of informing against them or trying to checkmate them in other ways. They are, in fact, most accomplished murderers, and they are now rich in the possession of an estate, which they began by appropriating from a commune, and which they have since greatly enlarged by further encroachments, to which no one dare make objection, and which not only provides them with wine, wood, and oil in plenty, but feeds their flocks of sheep and pigs. The police have tried seizing the latter. The animals were duly sold by auction on account of the state; but it was an unfortunate affair for the purchasers only, seeing that anon the Bellacoscia reclaimed their property with arguments that were not to be resisted.

In 1869, when the Empress Eugénie visited Corsica, the Bellacoscia threw themselves at her feet as she passed through Bocognano. The charges against them were surely even then sufficient to excuse the police from being over-chivalrous with regard to them. They were not arrested, however, nor were they pardoned. It was war to the knife, or rather the gun (their favourite weapon) afterwards as it had been before. Again,

¹ Written in 1890.

in 1890, the wife and daughter of Giacomo descended from the Pintica nest to intercept M. Carnot in his progress through the island. The old woman had nothing to ask for her husband or husband's brother (that were a waste of breath, seeing that they had all the liberty they could have); but she wanted a remission of the sentence against one of her sons, lying in prison at Bastia. The father of this boy thought to give him a flavour of the gentleman by sending him to school in Ajaccio. When he left school, however, he soon killed his first man, and it was for this act that he was atoning as a convict.

Such are the famous bandits Bonelli, or Bellacoscia! It really seems as if France were proud of them, and did all in its power to preserve them as remarkable specimens of lawlessness for the diversion of visitors. With a little management it is no hard thing to get introduced to the rogues and their home. The old men are civil enough to a stranger, and especially if he is rich and an admirer of eccentric types. They will give him the kiss of peace, and bid their pretty daughters fetch wine-cups that they may drink his health. If they are asked to furnish proofs of their skill at musketry, to oblige him they will shoot at twenty-franc gold-pieces or lift the cork from champagne-bottles at a respectable number of paces, until the visitor begins to find the diversion expensive; but they must be treated with a becoming amount of respect, or there is no knowing what such despots may take it into their heads to do. They have a seal for their letters which ensures them local delivery as surely as if they carried the stamp of the republic. They have received presents of value from ladies and gentlemen with royal blood in their veins, and they stand towards the rest of the world not a little like Napoleon himself in the height of his fortune. They are by no means ordinary beings. Heaven only knows whether they will die, as they have lived, out of the pale of the law; but it may safely be said that their end will not be a violent one. The district would revolt rather than suffer such a wrong to be done upon its heroes—its lords and its masters. If certain local politicians are to be believed, Corsica has already lost much of its regard for the Republic simply and solely because M. Carnot confessed himself personally willing enough to pardon the Bellacoscia, but, in deference to the law, unable to do so.

The Bellacoscia are the type of a kind of Corsican bandit, but not the worst. They do not seem ever to have indulged in indis-

criminate brigandage. Doubtless if they were forced into a corner they would not mind kidnapping a lord and holding him for ransom, or even lifting a purse like an ordinary highwayman. But fortune has treated them more civilly. They have nothing in common, therefore, with ruffians like the three bandits who, in November, 1886, at eight o'clock in the evening, entered an hotel in Ajaccio and demanded 3,000 francs from the landlady under the terrorism of their pistols. The hotel was full of guests, and the waiters were running about with dishes for the *table d'hôte* dinner. Such extreme publicity was too much even for the nerves of a Corsican bandit, and so when an alarm was given these rascals stole off, though not without firing a volley which nearly killed a man. In the same year there was a case of dastardly murder by bandits. An Italian vessel sent two sailors ashore for fresh water. The bandits seized them and sent one aboard with a demand for ransom; this was refused, and they blew out the brains of their wretched captive and left him prone upon the shore. With such deeds the Bellacoscia profess to have no sympathy.

Of a truth, life in Corsica is not an unmitigated blessing. The child unborn may be saddled with the grimmest responsibilities by its earnest mother; and ere it is weaned it may have learned by heart the sound of the lament which anon will be a more immediate spur to retaliatory crime. A sketch from modern life will illustrate this. Some eight years ago the body of a man of Sartène was found lying upon the ground; the news was taken to his wife, who hurried to the spot with her children, made them put their fingers into their dead father's wounds, smear their little faces with the blood, and swear, with an emphasis fit to terrify them, that they would avenge him. Here is a fine tragedy, the first act alone of which has been played. Meanwhile the children are growing, and when they are well in their first teens the boys will begin to rehearse the murder or murders which have been imposed upon them as an imperative duty. Ere the century is out, bloody atonement will be made.

The Sartène district is, indeed, so pervaded with the vendetta that the tourist may not unreasonably fear lest he be the scape-goat for some local bandit. How is he to know the history of the gentlemanly rustic in black velvet and a black slouched hat who, with a gun on his shoulder, accosts him upon the high road, and charms him with his conversation for an hour or two? To be sure, he may guess a little if he marks the eager glances on both

hands where the scrub or the rocks are suggestive of an ambuscade; but at the same time he may be unwilling to cast a slur upon so entertaining a comrade even in fancy, and the crack of a rifle may then be his first intimation of danger. The bandit among the rocks will no doubt be a shrewd marksman. Yet in the intensity of his joy at sight of his enemy his nerves may just divert the ball into the heart of the innocent instead of the guilty person.

It is the rule, however, for a bandit in vendetta, especially if he have a good many relatives, not to stir out unprovided with an escort of them. They may number a dozen, or but two or three. The stranger meeting this troop of mounted and well-armed natives is apt to wonder, until he gets behind the scenes of Corsican life.

An escort of this kind is not a mere formal concession of friendship which upon trial will be found wanting in reality. At the least sign of peril, every man will fight for his ward to the death. A recent instance of this is on record. The gendarmes met a notorious bandit riding along, with four friends as a guard. As they outnumbered the others, they instantly attacked the party; of the five, four were killed, wounded, or taken prisoners. The bandit himself, who was the fifth, escaped.

The breadth of social anarchy in the Sartène district will be better understood by the fact that, eight years ago, out of a population of about eight thousand, more than four thousand were on the criminal list. Of course they were not all murderers; but it may without exaggeration be said that each of these criminals at large had the making of a murderer in him. The peasant condemned to pay a fine for letting his pigs stray into his neighbour's vineyard is as like as not, in a fit of rage, to take the life of the neighbour who complained of him or of the mayor who condemned him. Nowhere do little crimes swell more readily into monstrous ones.

At least half the 'vendette' in existence at the present time have, like the Trojan war, had trivial beginnings. A quarrel at a wrestling match; a dead dog; the ownership of a pig that has probably roamed wild ever since it was littered; a vote at a political election; or an ambiguous phrase used in public—anything is enough to set the Corsican blood in a boil. That is the prologue. Then some one is killed. The blood-tax of atonement will afterwards keep the quarrel afoot from generation to generation. It may end in the extinction of two entire families, or by

mutual consent the heads of the families at enmity may descend from the bush and reconcile themselves before a court of justice. No matter if they have each been homicides thrice or four times over: the French Courts respect the Corsican tradition, whereby 'a reconciliation blots out the past.'

It is all very well for romancers to imagine that the life of a bold bandit is one of unadulterated charm. It never could have been that. Hate is a warm passion, but the snows of winter, the rains and mists of the mountains, go far to put out its flames in so far as they help to comfort the man in whom they are flickering. There is no need for the Corsican bandit to starve. He has many ways of victualling himself. In this or that unoccupied country house he knows that he will periodically find a store of coarse food, which is the proprietor's retaining fee for his services in case of need. The shepherds of the uplands, too, are bound to conciliate such clever marksmen, and welcome them to potluck at supper-time. And if the bandits are capable men, they need never lack a sufficiency of friends in certain towns and villages; so that the pleasure of a day or two of more lusty life may also be open to them. Still, a man must have a bold heart and a stout constitution to tolerate more than a month or two in the bush.

'No more ham and no more rice!' sings one of these outlaws in his lament; 'we have nothing to do but weep,' and, it may be added, keep a good watch upon the movements of the enemy 'in order to destroy them.'

Surely pity for his wretched condition would be wasted upon the man who nourishes himself upon such grim anticipations as the following 'vocero' suggests:

'I, the unfortunate Don Giacomo, called Chiaverini, bandit at large, who have had two brothers killed, both innocent.

'My poor mother, I see her and my sister, both weeping, and always bewailing our woe. Is there any cure for our sorrow?

'Yes, I can cure it with the lead I carry in my belt. I trust his blood will redden the earth. I long also to steep in it the clothes I wear.

'I want to kill him—kill him pitilessly. And then I will tear him open and take out his heart and eat it, that my honour may be avenged!'

Of 135 homicides who, in 1886, figured in the police reports of Bastia (where the assizes are held), as many as 56 were the result of vendetta. No wonder the island is in a deplorable

condition financially. Thousands of the inhabitants concentrate their faculties upon this one object only: the doing of wrong to others who have or are believed to have done wrong to them.

Here is a little story of Corsican life. Two brothers of good family had lived together in fair harmony until April of 1890. To be sure they had had a lawsuit with each other, but that was settled amicably after a while. Well, one day they rose and breakfasted together as usual. The elder brother then went into his bedroom, which in Corsican fashion opened from the dining-room. A moment later he stole back with a hatchet in his hand, and, while his brother was lighting a cigar, dealt him a blow behind, upon the neck, as if to decapitate him. The would-be assassin was eighty-eight years old. What a stock of vitality he must have had, to be able to nurse his resentment to the degree at which he felt compelled to avenge himself by his brother's death! However, the victim did not die, and the old man had energy enough left to withdraw to his own room and commit suicide.

The author of 'Mr. Barnes of New York' has shown true grasp of the Corsican character in his heroine. Though it is not the fashion in the island to rate a woman as the equal of a man, she will, if need be, do her duty in vengeance as well as a man.

'Speak, whom wilt thou choose to execute thy vendetta?' sings Maria Felice of Calacuccia, on the death of her brother. 'Thy mother? But she is dying. Thy sister Maria? Yes, she will do. And so—

I will buy myself a pistol
And in breeches me attire.'

These aids, with the bloodstained shirt of the murdered man as a perennial reminder, will generally suffice.

Upon the whole, the ideal of womankind in Corsica is not of a kind to charm the more fastidious among us of civilised lands. In the full grip of their passion of hate they would seem loathsome to us, however adorable to a thoroughbred Corsican. Even their gift of poetic improvisation, which is thought such a fine attribute in them, must be a very dubious blessing to those who provide them with a subject to rhyme upon. The following verses are a case in point. A certain man had married a girl against the will of her family. The girl died after a year or two of married life, and then, at the wake (for, if wine be substituted for whisky, the scene bears comparison with that of the Irish death-chamber—save that it is more sober), the dead woman's sister came and

sang this lament in the presence of the unfortunate husband and his relatives :

‘Are these the promises that thy husband made thee ? That thou shouldst have a dress at the beginning of every month ?

‘Where are thy bonnets ? Where thy velvets ? What has thy husband done with them ? Has he pawned or has he sold them ?

‘Is that fellow there thy husband ? And that other thy brother-in-law ? The one looks like an executioner, and the other a man outside the pale of society.

‘Is this thy palace : are these thy halls ? Oh, Cecca, sister of my heart, it is but a shepherd’s hovel !

‘Where are thy sons ? They are shut up in their rooms, half starved, barefooted, and naked.

‘In thy father’s house thou wert wont to wear fine laced boots. In the house of Orsolo Matteo (the husband) there is not a single pair of old shoes.

‘In thy father’s house there were lamps of all kinds. In the house of Orsolo Matteo there is hardly a splinter of pine.

‘In thy father’s house, there were delicious cakes. In the house of Orsolo Matteo scarcely even some bread made of chestnuts.

‘I have not come here to eat. I have not come here to drink. I have come here to sorrow for Cecca, and then I shall go away. She has left three eggs in her nest (three children). I shall carry them off with me.’

Though probably much depressed on account of his bereavement, the poor widower must have felt strongly inclined to box his sister-in-law’s ears during this shrewish song, which is solid testimony that in Corsica, as elsewhere, the fair sex are supreme in the use of the tongue.

As a land to travel in, Corsica is very tiresome and very lovely. It is tiresome because it has few railways, and because its diligences are of the most uncouth and obsolete kind.

It may seem bold to say that the bandits are accountable for the lack of railway enterprise. That, however, is the truth. It is the most difficult thing in the world to buy out, upon anything like equitable terms, the proprietors of land intersected by proposed railway lines. The arbitrators are biassed, like all other classes of people in Corsica. They have their friends and their foes ; the former are favoured, the latter wronged. If a friend and a foe are each called upon to surrender an acre or two of the

same kind of land, the one will get an award many times greater than the other. This breeds bad blood; some one is killed in consequence. Perhaps several bandits in the pay of one of the two parties descend from the hills, and compel the arbitrator to do their biddings at the peril of his life. The Bellacoscia family, for example, think nothing of interfering in the works of the state railway destined (perhaps ere A.D. 2000) to link Bastia and Ajaccio. If they have friends who want to earn a little money at rail-laying or blasting, they put it to the contractor, 'Either you must dismiss so many of your workmen and take on our nominees, or we will stop your proceedings.' It is of no use for the contractor to pretend to be superior to such interference. In the end, the bandits rule the roost.

One owes it to these gentry that one is obliged to leave the railway at Vizzavone, and drive the thirty kilometres of mountain and valley which still separate Corte from Ajaccio. This would be less of a hardship if one could sit at ease in the diligence, and view the delightful country through which one gallops. But as it is, the snow-peaks above the chestnut trees and pine woods must be imagined, not seen, by the average traveller under such conditions. The passengers are packed like oranges inside the vehicle, or cramped in the 'banquette,' with the sides of the hood of the car as bars to vision. One hears the roar of waterfalls, but sees nothing of the water. One knows that one is in the midst of mountain scenery unmatched in the Mediterranean, but only the most trivial glimpses of it are obtainable. This of itself ought to be enough to put even the most romantic of travellers out of humour with the bandits who get their spoke into the administration of the land to such very bad purpose.

One may read something of the eccentric hardness of their lives in the faces of the Corsican villagers amid whom one passes either afoot, mounted, or in diligence. The men may be very amiable fellows—in all matters that do not touch what they conceive to be their honour; nevertheless they seem to lour abominably; and one would not be surprised to see each man of them, as if in concert, move his hand towards that inner waistcoat-pocket where he carries his stiletto.

But a little thought will remove all wonder that they are so dark of brow. Each village and each town is divided against itself. The clan spirit breeds the fury of the Kilkenny cats within them. It finds a vent at every election; and between one election

and another it continues to smoulder, with occasional outbreaks which have dire issues. The men of one party meet the men of the other party many times a day, and give them no salutation. A 'good-morrow' or 'good-e'en' from one to the other might be misconstrued, and a stiletto thrust or a bullet pay for the irony and add one more to the troop of rogues in the hills above who play with their more law-abiding brethren as if they were chessmen set out upon the green valleys to be moved hither and thither at will.

Of course a stranger does not stand towards the Corsicans as they stand towards each other. They are neither so intimate with him as they are with the members of their own clan, nor are they likely to be envenomed against him as if he were an ancestral enemy. But they do not discredit their reputation for an amount of hospitality that may even be termed generous. In the Cap Corse district the writer found this almost embarrassing. He was expected to drink more wine than is good for any man, and smoke cigars as fast as they would burn. The wine was of home pressing, and as the hosts stood by prepared for compliments, a certain amount of flattery had to be served out to them. A lady with whom and her brother I one day spent a number of hours in a diligence worthy to be compared with the little-ease torture-box pressed me to make her father's house my home for the night, and showed grief when I felt compelled to decline the invitation. Upon another occasion this regard was also shown in a more remarkable way. I was walking over the mountains from one side of the peninsula to the other, in company with a stout guide in whose house I had spent the night, when we came to a little upland village and a church into which it seemed desirable to enter. 'Why,' I asked afterwards, 'did you not take the holy water when we passed the stoup?' 'From delicacy, sir,' was the reply, spoken eagerly, as if it was a relief to justify himself. 'I did not know if you were a Catholic, and if you were not, I thought it might give you offence.' If that was not courtesy of the most admirable kind, I don't know what is. Though, to be sure, a cynic might explain it upon the ground that in Corsica social intercourse is so very ticklish an affair that the utmost caution is needful to keep from injuring some one's sensibilities and incurring the consequences.

Cap Corse is charming. The 'Cap Corsicans,' as they call themselves, like to fancy that they are more intelligent than the

Corsicans elsewhere. Perhaps they are. They certainly have a knack of acquiring and keeping money. Many of them owe their wealth to the Argentine Republic, but they prefer to come home to spend their last days on the breezy shores of this herb-clad headland. In one part of the peninsula, where a road is cut through a mountain pass at an elevation of about 1,500 feet above the sea, there is an inscription recording 'the last thought of a Corsican dying two thousand leagues from home.' This is the thought:—'Write to our country folk, and tell them to make the road from Pirio to S. Lucia. If money is wanted, there is some one who will provide it.' In effect, the work was done at the expense of this patriotic exile. Really, it was the Commune's business; but the Communes in Corsica have other ways of utilising such money as does chance to come into their hands. Public works are quite the last things they think of. The bandits who control the mayors, who control the exchequer, do not like the idea of making the profession of gendarme easier than it is, or their own existence more precarious. The national roads made at the expense of the state are sufficiently sharp thorns in their sides.

No part of Corsica can be called very sophisticated, and Cap Corse perhaps least of all. It does one's civilised heart good to see how important a personage is the conductor of the wretched diligence which creeps to and fro between Bastia and its villages. The bright-eyed damsels meet the vehicle while it is yet far from the village, and begin their interrogations. Has he the medicine for Jacquetta's mother?—the love-letter for Marcia? For one family there is a newspaper; for another a bunch of greens (the lazy Cap Corsicans would rather buy their salad material than grow it); for a third a parcel of flannel; a fourth a message; and for the fifth, maybe, a menace shouted *en route* and the delivery of which makes its recipient go pale and bite his lips. It is a marvel how the conductor keeps his head in the midst of the agitated questionings, made in the same breath, to which he is subjected when at length the car has been dragged through the chestnut woods of the villages to the little post-office in the heart of the village. Here half the population is assembled, either to bless him for doing their errands, or to pour forth the vials of their wrath upon him for forgetting their commissions. And round about stand the little Cap Corse boys, staring with admiration at the equipage and all concerned with it, and ready at a sign to fall down and worship his majesty the driver, or blush rosy red with

honest boyish pride if the man does but flick his whip at them in a moment of condescending levity.

But the serpent is among these winsome upland villages, as elsewhere in Corsica. Gazing towards the nether blue sea from their terraces, through the vista of forest trees in spring leafage, the scene savours of Paradise, and the sweet bracing air is a joy to breathe. Yet murder, perjury, and embezzlement are commonplace crimes in these sylvan spots.

I chanced to be in the peninsula at a time when the new prefect of Corsica was making his tour of the island. Each little village *en route* had its arches of welcome, with ropes of dandelion heads hanging to the ground, and the usual words of salutation done on scrolls. One village in particular was populous with gentlemen in broadcloth and tall hats. The prefect himself had arrived, and to and fro his worship drove, bowing to the villagers. These received him humbly, though the officials among them tried their lungs at an ovation. Certain fair damsels in Paris hats looked as if they enjoyed the sensation, and were as eager to be noticed as to notice. But for the rest it was a flat triumph. And well it might be. For the prefect in Corsica does not walk on roses. His worship had had some five- or six-and-twenty predecessors in the last twenty years, and each man had failed to make the island any the happier for his brief term of office.

The fact is the prefect is almost as much under the thumb of the bandits as are the rural mayors and sub-prefects. He may be a man of immense determination and complete integrity, who reaches Ajaccio from Paris fully aware of the lamentable condition of the island, and thoroughly resolved to wipe away the disgrace that is upon it—in short, to substitute the rule of law for the rule of anarchy. But how can he succeed, when the only instruments by which he is to work his reforms are instruments in the pay of anarchy? He will not at the outset believe that it is so; the idea is too monstrous. But by-and-by he learns only too well that he can reap little honour in this department of France. And so he resigns or is superseded, and the land passes into the hands of another prefect who has to be disillusioned in like manner.

How long will France consent to let the condition of this lovely island fall gradually from bad to worse? It may be said that this paper is pessimistic—that it is absurd to suppose that in the year 1890 a petty province of one of the leading states of Europe is torn by civil war which the state itself is powerless to

quell. It is absurd, but it is not the less true. The report of Monsieur Bourde in 1887, to which I am indebted for much of my material, is one for which no apology can be made. Some writers give Corsica the name of 'the Green Isle,' which we give to Ireland. We have been vigorously reproached with the barbaric condition of our Green Isle, but the anarchy of Ireland at its worst a few years ago was nothing to that which at present exists in Corsica.

Are the bandits the cause or the effect of Corsica's disorder?

At first sight it may be thought that they are the cause. When one reads of their despotic intermeddling in the administration of the island—carried to such a pitch that the elections are made under the shadow of their guns—it does not seem so very rash to blame them for all the consequences of such venal elections. The mayors of the communes are their creatures; or, if not, they must be ousted at the next ballot. The jurymen in the law courts do all they can to avoid serving. It is a common menace with them to warn the prisoner on trial for murder that if he does not challenge them on a plausible pretext, that may procure them their dismissal, they will bring him in 'guilty.' On the other hand, it is no great matter if the captured bandit be condemned, though his hands may have been drenched with blood. The Court of Assize at Bastia thinks five years' imprisonment enough punishment for the crime of 'murder with provocation,' which is their definition of killing in vendetta. The family at enmity with the felon and his family in such a case are not, however, of the opinion of the court. They estimate the value of their relation's life at more than five years' penal servitude. This very odd result therefore follows, that whereas the murderer's foes would have been content to stay their hands if their enemy had been treated with proper severity by the law (that is, sentenced either for life or fifteen years), as it is they feel bound by their code of honour to take up the gage once more against the family of their foe. 'Five years is not sufficient for the life of our Francesco or Giacomo,' they say; and in a week or so they contrive to shoot the prisoner's father or mother or brother to square the account. Hence fresh entanglements which no Corsican judge can easily unravel.

The historian Filippini, writing of the state of Corsica three hundred years ago, says that one of the great misfortunes of the island is the number of 'those infernal instruments called guns

in the hands of the inhabitants.' These same words are quite applicable to-day. Napoleon III. forbade the carrying of arms in the island. Under his reign the number of bandits was gradually reduced, so that at the time of Sedan it is supposed not twenty were left at large. Compare this with the picture of 1890, when no discreet peasant travels without his gun, and when at the lowest estimate the number of bandits has increased fivefold, while more authoritative reckonings make them twenty-five times as many as in 1870. During the year 1886 alone it is believed that seventy-eight bandits took to the hills. The number of gendarmes in the island has been raised from seven hundred to nine hundred in the effort to make headway against them.

There seems, too, to be no doubt that the increase of the bandits is the outcome of the administration of the island. In Corsica, as of old in the Highlands, the clan spirit is predominant. Loyalty to the clan is a greater virtue than loyalty to the law. This notion is not confined to the more lowly members of the clan. Rich Corsicans, who have been educated in Paris, and have afterwards returned to the island, have found it impossible to resist the national tendency. Though they admire justice in the abstract, they love their clansmen more than they love the law. If they have to sacrifice one to the other, it is the law that must go to the wall.

This is the key to the puzzle. From judges to jury, all are affected by the endemic disease of lawlessness. The clan in power carries all before it. The clan that aspires to be in power devotes all its energies to intrigues which have but one aim—to abase its rival. No wonder then that the elections in the island are very serious affairs. There is a vast deal of comedy about them too, but it is so interlaced with the roots of tragedy that one is prone to overlook it. The mayors of the villages falsify the electoral lists, add to or take from the names as it suits their convenience, and use all manner of tricks to keep in power once they are in power. On the other hand, when the opposing clan feels that it has the majority it has long striven and waited for, it does not hesitate to use force to expel the defeated clan, if its officers will not take their dismissal more gently. This is then easy; for the change is one that takes place all down the line—from the judge who judges the electoral suits to the mayors who are so vitally interested in them.

Every peasant of Corsica is affected more or less by this

political or quasi-political ferment. He must belong to one clan or the other, or else confess himself friendless, and therefore a prey to both factions. Needless to say how crimes originate in the midst of such turmoil of passions, and how the punishment for crime, as for all other contraventions of the law, is meted out strictly in accordance—not with justice, but with the requirements of the clan. Taxes are levied on the same admirable principle. A friend pays little or nothing; an enemy considerably more than his due. As for the proceeds of such taxation, Heaven and the officers concerned with their collection alone know what becomes of them. During the year 1885 about 1,000,000 francs of fines were imposed upon petty offenders in the island. Of this sum only 75,000 francs were paid; about half was carried forward as 'recoverable but not paid,' and the rest was accounted for by the word 'irrecoverable.' The rural mayors cheerfully cancelled the demands made upon their own clansmen by equivalent certificates of poverty.

It may well be left to the imagination to trace the evolution of modern banditism from the social chaos that must be the result of such administration as this. Between a mayor of a village and the bandits whom he petitions for help in this or that arbitrary proceeding there can be but a difference of degree. Next year the mayor himself may be an outlaw in the scrub, and the bandits with whom he formerly fraternised may have made their peace with the law and their enemies.

One understands at length that the very blood in his veins compels the Corsican in certain straits to condemn himself to outlawry. It is the only honourable course open to him. If you ask him for a definition of the word bandit, he will reply with pride 'a man who has found himself obliged to take the law into his own hands.' The somewhat academical explanation of the term 'vendetta' given the other day by Antonio Bonelli (Bellacoscia) the younger is close akin to this: 'It is the historical impossibility under which the Corsicans have laboured for centuries to obtain justice at the hands of their rulers and tyrants.'

As one glides away from the seven-storied white houses of Bastia, over the smooth blue sea towards Italy, one is sensible of a certain gladness in leaving 'this island of death,' as Gregorovius calls it. It is too depressing a land to be a holiday resort, in spite of its beauty. The white tombs which mottle its green shores are only too suggestive.

THE SOWERS.

BY HENRY SETON MERRIMAN,

AUTHOR OF 'WITH EDGED TOOLS,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXV.

OSTERNO.

'ALWAYS gay; always gay!' laughed Steinmetz, rubbing his broad hands together and looking down into the face of Maggie, who was busy at the breakfast-table.

'Yes,' answered the girl, glancing towards Paul, leaning against the window reading his letters. 'Yes, always gay. Why not?'

Karl Steinmetz saw the glance. It was one of the little daily incidents that one sees and half forgets. He only half forgot it.

'Why not, indeed?' he answered. 'And you will be glad to hear that Ivanovitch is as ready as yourself this morning to treat the matter as a joke. He is none the worse for his freezing and all the better for his experience. You have added another friend, my dear young lady, to a list which is, doubtless, a very long one.'

'He is a nice man,' answered Maggie. 'How is it,' she asked, after a little pause, 'that there are more men in the lower classes whom one can call nice than among their betters?'

Paul paused between two letters, hearing the question. He looked up as if interested in the answer, but did not join in the conversation.

'Because dealing with animals and with nature is more conducive to niceness than too much trafficking with human beings,' replied Steinmetz promptly.

'I suppose that is it,' said Maggie, lifting the teapot lid and looking in. 'At all events, it is the sort of answer one might expect from you. You are always hard on human nature.'

'I take it as I find it,' replied Steinmetz with a laugh, 'but I do not worry about it like some people. Now, Paul would like to alter the course of the world.'

As he spoke he half turned towards Paul, as if suggesting that

he should give an opinion, and this little action had the effect of putting a stop to the conversation. Maggie had plenty to say to Steinmetz, but towards Paul her mental attitude was different. She was probably unaware of this little fact.

'There,' she said, after a pause, 'I have obeyed Etta's instructions. She does not want us to begin, I suppose?'

'No,' replied Paul. 'She will be down in a minute.'

'I hope the Princess is not overtired,' said Steinmetz, with a certain formal politeness which seemed to accompany any mention of Etta's name.

'Not at all, thank you,' replied Etta herself, coming into the room at that moment. She looked fresh and self-confident. 'On the contrary, I am full of energy and eagerness to explore the castle. One naturally takes an interest in one's baronial halls.'

With this she walked slowly across to the window. She stood there looking out, and everyone in the room was watching. On looking for the first time on the same view a few moments earlier Maggie had uttered a little cry of surprise, and had then remained silent. Etta looked out of the window and said nothing. It was a most singular outlook—weird, uncouth, prehistoric, as some parts of the earth still are. The castle was built on the edge of a perpendicular cliff. On this side it was impregnable. Any object dropped from the breakfast-room window would fall a clear two hundred feet to the brawling Oster River. The rock was black, and shining like the topmost crags of an Alpine mountain where snow and ice have polished the bare stone. Beyond and across the river lay the boundless steppe—a sheet of virgin snow.

Etta stood looking over this to the far horizon, where the white snow and the grey sky softly merged into one. Her first remark was characteristic, as first and last remarks usually are.

'And as far as you can see is yours?' she asked.

'Yes,' answered Paul simply, with that calm which only comes with hereditary possession.

The observation attracted Steinmetz's attention. He went to another window, and looked across the waste critically.

'Four times as far as we can see is his,' he said.

Etta looked out slowly and comprehensively, absorbing it all like a long sweet drink. There was no hereditary calmness in her sense of possession.

'And where is Thors?' she asked.

Paul stretched out his arm, pointing with a lean, steady finger. 'It lies out there,' he answered.

Another of the little incidents that are only half forgotten. Some of the persons assembled in that room remembered the pointing finger long afterwards.

'It makes one feel very small,' said Etta, turning to the breakfast-table—'at no time a pleasant sensation.'

'Do you know,' she said, after a little pause, 'I think it probable that I shall become very fond of Ostérno, but I wish it were nearer to civilisation.'

Paul looked pleased. Steinmetz had a queer expression on his face. Maggie murmured something about one's surroundings making but little difference to one's happiness, and the subject was wisely shelved.

After breakfast Steinmetz withdrew.

'Now,' said Paul, 'shall I show you the old place, you and Maggie?'

Etta signified her readiness, but Maggie said that she had letters to write, that Etta could show her the castle another time, when the men were out shooting perhaps.

'But,' said Etta, 'I shall do it horribly badly. They are not my ancestors, you know. I shall attach the stories to the wrong people, and locate the ghost in the wrong room. You will be wise to take Paul's guidance.'

'No, thank you,' replied Maggie, quite firmly and frankly. 'I feel inclined to write; and the feeling is rare, so I must take advantage of it.'

The girl looked at her cousin with something in her honest blue eyes that almost amounted to wonder. Etta was always surprising her. There was a whole gamut of feeling, an octave of callow, half-formed girlish instincts, of which Etta seemed to be deprived. If she had ever had them, no trace was left of their whilom presence. At first Maggie had flatly refused to come to Russia. When Paul pressed her to do so, she accepted with a sort of wonder. There was something which she did not understand.

The same instinct made her refuse now to accompany Paul and Etta over their new home. Again Etta pressed her, showing her lack of some feeling which Maggie indefinitely knew she ought to have had. This time Paul made no sign. He added no word to Etta's persuasions, but stood gravely looking at his wife.

When the door had closed behind them, Maggie stood for some minutes by the window looking out over the snowclad plain, the rugged, broken rocks beneath her.

Then she turned to the writing-table. She resolutely took pen and paper, but the least thing seemed to distract her attention—the coronet on the note-paper cost her five minutes of far-off reflection. She took up the pen again, and wrote ‘Dear Mother.’

The room grew darker. Maggie looked up. The snow had begun again. It was driving past the window with a silent, purposeful monotony. The girl drew the writing-case towards her. She examined the pen critically and dipped it into the ink. But she added nothing to the two words already written.

The castle of Osterno is almost unique in the particular that one roof covers the ancient and the modern buildings. The vast reception-rooms, worthy of the name of state-rooms, adjoin the small stone-built apartments of the fortress which Paul’s ancestors held against the Tartars. This grimmer side of the building Paul reserved to the last for reasons of his own, and Etta’s manifest delight in the grandeur of the more modern apartments fully rewarded him. Here, again, that side of her character manifested itself which has already been shown. She was dazzled and exhilarated by the splendour of it all, and the immediate effect was a feeling of affection towards the man to whom this belonged, who was in act, if not in word, laying it at her feet.

When they passed from the lofty rooms to the dimmer passages of the old castle Etta’s spirits visibly dropped, her interest slackened. He told her of tragedies enacted in bygone times—such ancient tales of violent death and broken hearts as attach themselves to grey stone walls and dungeon keeps. She only half listened, for her mind was busy with the splendours they had left behind, with the purposes to which such splendours could be turned. And the sum-total of her thoughts was gratified vanity.

Her bright presence awakened the gloom of ages within the dimly-lit historical rooms. Her laugh sounded strangely light and frivolous and shallow in the silence of the ages which had brooded within these walls since the days of Tamerlane. It was perhaps the greatest tragedy of the Alexis family, this beautiful tragedy that walked by the side of Paul.

‘I am glad your grandfather brought French architects here and built the modern side,’ she said. ‘These rooms are, of course,

very interesting, but gloomy—horribly gloomy, Paul. There is a smell of ghosts and dullness.'

'All the same, I like these rooms,' answered Paul. 'Steinmetz and I used to live entirely on this side of the house. This is the smoking-room. We shot those bears, and all the deer. That is a wolf's head. He killed a keeper before I finished him off.'

Etta looked at her husband with a curious little smile. She sometimes felt proud of him, despite the ever-present knowledge that, intellectually speaking, she was his superior. There was something strong and simple and manly in a sort of mediæval way that pleased her in this big husband of hers.

'And how did you finish him off?' she asked.

'I choked him. That bear knocked me down, but Steinmetz shot him. We were four days out in the open after that elk. This is a lynx—a queer face—rather like De Chauxville; the dogs killed him.'

'But why do you not paper the room,' asked Etta, with a shiver, 'instead of this gloomy panelling? It is so mysterious and creepy. Quite suggestive of secret passages.'

'There are no secret passages,' answered Paul. 'But there is a room behind here. This is the door. I will show it to you presently. I have things in there I want to show you. I keep all my medicines and appliances in there. It is our secret surgery and office. In that room the Charity League was organised.'

Etta turned away suddenly and went to the narrow window, where she sat on a low window-seat, looking down into the snow-clad depths.

'I did not know you were a doctor,' she said.

'I doctor the peasants,' replied Paul, 'in a rough-and-ready way. I took my degree on purpose. But, of course, they do not know that it is I; they think I am a doctor from Moscow. I put on an old coat, and wear a scarf, so that they cannot see my face. I only go to them at night. It would never do for the Government to know that we attempt to do good to the peasants. We have to keep it a secret even from the people themselves. And they hate us. They groan and hoot when we drive through the village. But they never attempt to do us any harm; they are too much afraid of us.'

When Etta rose and came towards him her face was colourless.

'Let me see this room,' she said.

He opened the door and followed her into the apartment, which

has already been described. Here he told further somewhat bald details of the work he had attempted to do. It is to be feared that he made neither an interesting nor a romantic story of it. There were too many details—too much statistic, and no thrilling realism whatever. The experiences of a youthful curate in Bethnal Green would have made high tragedy beside the tale that this man told his wife of the land upon which God has assuredly laid His curse—Aceldama, the field of blood.

Etta listened, and despite herself she became interested. She was sitting in the chair usually occupied by Steinmetz. There was a faint aroma of tobacco smoke. The atmosphere of the room was manly and energetic.

Paul showed her his simple stores of medicine—the old coat saturated with disinfectants which had become the recognised outward sign of the Moscow Doctor.

‘And do other people, other noblemen, try to do this sort of thing too?’ asked Etta at length.

‘Catrina Lanovitch does,’ replied Paul.

‘What! The girl with the hair?’

‘Yes,’ answered Paul. He had never noticed Catrina’s hair. Etta’s appraising eye had seen more in one second than Paul had perceived in twenty years.

‘Yes,’ he answered. ‘But, of course, she is handicapped.’

‘By her appearance?’

‘No; by her circumstances. Her name is sufficient to handicap her every movement in this country. But she does a great deal. She—she found me out, confound her!’

Etta had risen; she was looking curiously at the cupboard where Paul’s infected clothes were hanging. He had forbidden her to go near it. She turned and looked at him.

‘Found you out! How?’ she asked, with a queer smile.

‘Saw through my disguise.’

‘Yes—she would do that!’ said Etta aloud to herself.

‘What is this door?’ she asked, after a pause.

‘It leads to an inner room,’ replied Paul, ‘where Steinmetz usually works.’

He passed in front of her and opened the door. As he was doing so Etta went on in the train of her thoughts:

‘So Catrina knows.’

‘Yes.’

‘And no one else?’

Paul made no answer; for he had passed on into the smaller room, where Steinmetz was seated at a writing-table.

'Except, of course, Herr Steinmetz?' Etta went on interrogatively.

'Madame,' said the German, looking up with his pleasant smile, 'I know *everything*.'

And he went on writing.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BLOODHOUNDS.

THE *table d'hôte* of the Hôtel de Moscou at Tver had just begun. The soup had been removed; the diners were engaged in igniting their first cigarette at the candles placed between each pair of them for that purpose. By nature the modern Russian is a dignified and somewhat reserved gentleman. By circumstance he has been schooled into a state of guarded unsociability. If there is a seat at a public table conveniently removed from those occupied by earlier arrivals, the new-comer invariably takes it. In Russia one converses—as in Scotland one jokes—with difficulty.

A Russian *table d'hôte* is therefore anything but hilarious in its tendency. A certain number of grave-faced gentlemen and a few broad-jowled ladies are visibly constrained by the force of circumstance to dine at the same table and hour, *et voilà tout*. There is no pretence that any more sociable and neighbourly motive has brought them together. Indeed, they each suspect the other of being a German, or a Nihilist, or, worse still, a Government servant. They therefore sit as far apart as possible, and smoke cigarettes between and during the courses with that self-centred absorption which would be rude, if it were not entirely satisfactory, to the average Briton. The ladies, of course, have the same easy method of showing a desire for silence and reflection in a country where nurses carrying infants usually smoke in the streets, and where a dainty confectioner's assistant places her cigarette between her lips in order to leave her hands free for the service of her customers.

The *table d'hôte* of the Hôtel de Moscou at Tver was no exception to the general rule. In Russia, by the way, there are no exceptions to general rules. The personal habits of the native of Cronstadt differ in no way from those of the Czar's subject living in Petropavlovsk, eight thousand miles away.

Around the long table of the host were seated, at respectable intervals, a dozen or more gentlemen, who gazed stolidly at each other from time to time, while the host himself smiled broadly upon them all from that end of the room where the lift and the smell of cooking exercise their calling—the one to spoil the appetite, the other to pander to it when spoilt.

Of these dozen gentlemen we have only to deal with one—a man of broad, high forehead, of colourless eyes, of a mask-like face, who consumed what was put before him with as little noise as possible. Known in Paris as ‘Ce bon Vassili,’ this traveller. But in Paris one does not always use the word *bon* in its English sense of ‘good.’

Monsieur Vassili was evidently desirous of attracting as little attention as circumstances would allow. He was obviously doing his best to look like one who travelled in the interest of braid or buttons. Moreover, when Claude de Chauville entered the *table d’hôte* room, he concealed whatever surprise he may have felt behind a cloud of cigarette smoke. Through the same blue haze he met the Frenchman’s eye, a moment later, without the faintest twinkle of recognition.

These two worthies went through the weird courses provided by a cook professing a knowledge of French *cuisine* without taking any compromising notice of each other. When the meal was over Vassili inscribed the number of his bedroom in large figures on the label of his bottle of St. Emilion—after the manner of wise commercial-travellers in continental hotels. He subsequently turned the bottle round so that Claude de Chauville could scarcely fail to read the number, and with a vague and general bow he left the room.

In his apartment the genial Vassili threw more wood into the stove, drew forward the two regulation armchairs, and lighted all the candles provided. He then rang the bell and ordered liqueurs. There was evidently something in the nature of an entertainment about to take place in apartment number forty-four of the Hôtel de Moscou.

Before long a discreet knock announced the arrival of the expected visitor.

‘Entrez!’ cried Vassili; and De Chauville stood before him with a smile which in French is called *crâne*.

‘A pleasure,’ said Vassili behind his wooden face, ‘that I did not anticipate in Tver.’

'And consequently one that carries its own mitigation. An unanticipated pleasure, *mon ami*, is always inopportune. I make no doubt that you were sorry to see me.'

'On the contrary. Will you sit?'

'I can hardly believe,' went on De Chauxville, taking the proffered chair, 'that my appearance was opportune—on the principle, ha! ha! that a flower growing out of place is a weed. Gentlemen of the—eh—Home Office prefer, I know, to travel quietly!' He spread out his expressive hands as if smoothing the path of Monsieur Vassili through this stony world. 'Incognito,' he added guilelessly.

'One does not publish one's name from the housetops,' replied the Russian, with a glimmer of pride in his eyes, 'especially if it happen to be not quite obscure; but between friends, my dear Baron—between friends.'

'Yes. Then what are you doing in Tver?' inquired De Chauxville, with engaging frankness.

'Ah, that is a long story. But I will tell you—never fear—I will tell you on the usual terms.'

'Viz.?' inquired the Frenchman, lighting a cigarette.

Vassili accepted the match with a bow, and did likewise. He blew a guileless cloud of smoke towards the dingy ceiling.

'Exchange, my dear Baron, exchange.'

'Oh, certainly,' replied De Chauxville, who knew that Vassili was in all probability fully informed as to his movements past and prospective. 'I am going to visit some old friends in this Government—the Lanovitches, at Thors.'

'Ah!'

'You know them?'

Vassili raised his shoulders and made a little gesture with his cigarette, as much as to say, 'Why ask?'

De Chauxville looked at his companion keenly. He was wondering whether this man knew that he—Claude de Chauxville—loved Etta Howard-Alexis, and consequently hated her husband. He was wondering how much or how little this impenetrable individual knew and suspected.

'I have always said,' observed Vassili suddenly, 'that for unmitigated impertinence give me a diplomatist.'

'Ah! And what would you desire that I should, for the same commodity, give you now?'

'A woman.'

There was a short silence in the room while these two birds of a feather reflected.

Suddenly Vassili tapped himself on the chest with his forefinger.

'It was I,' he said, 'who crushed that very dangerous movement—the Charity League.'

'I know it.'

'A movement, my dear Baron, to educate the moujik, if you please. To feed him and clothe him, and teach him—to be discontented with his lot. To raise him up and make a man of him. Pah! He is a beast. Let him be treated as such. Let him work. If he will not work, let him starve and die.'

'The man who cannot contribute towards the support of those above him in life is superfluous,' said De Chauxville glibly.

'Precisely. Now, my dear Baron, listen to me!' The genial Vassili leant forward and tapped with one finger on the knee of De Chauxville, as if knocking at the door of his attention.

'I am all ears, *mon bon Monsieur*,' replied the Frenchman, rather coldly. He had just been reflecting that, after all, he did not want any favour from Vassili for the moment, and the manner of the latter was verging on the familiar.

'The woman—who—sold—me—the Charity League papers dined at my house in Paris—a fortnight ago,' said Vassili, with a staccato tap on his companion's knee by way of emphasis to each word.

'Then, my friend, I cannot—congratulate—you—on the society—in—which you move,' replied De Chauxville, mimicking his manner.

'Bah! She was a princess!'

'A princess?'

'Yes, of your acquaintance, Monsieur le Baron! And she came to my house with her—eh—husband—the Prince Paul Howard-Alexis.'

This was news indeed. De Chauxville leant back and passed his slim white hand across his brow with a slow pressure, as if wiping some writing from a slate—as if his forehead bore the writing of his thoughts and he was wiping it away. And the thoughts he thus concealed—who can count them? For thoughts are the quickest and the longest and the saddest things of this life. The first thought was that if he had known this three months earlier he could have made Etta marry him. And that

thought had a thousand branches. With Etta for his wife he might have been a different man. One can never tell what the effect of an acquired desire may be. One can only judge by analogy, and it would seem that it is a frustrated desire that makes the majority of villains.

But the news coming, thus too late, only served an evil purpose. For in that flash of thought Claude de Chauxville saw Paul's secrets given to him, Paul's wealth meted out to him, Paul in exile, Paul dead in Siberia, where death comes easily, Paul's widow Claude de Chauxville's wife. He wiped all the thoughts away, and showed to Vassili a face that was as composed and impertinent as usual.

'You said "her—eh—husband,"' he observed. 'Why? Why did you add that little "eh," my friend?'

Vassili rose and walked to the door that led through into his bedroom from the salon in which they were sitting. It was possible to enter the bedroom from another door and overhear any conversation that might be passing in the sitting-room. The investigation was apparently satisfactory, for the Russian came back. But he did not sit down. Instead, he stood leaning against the tall china stove.

'Needless to tell you,' he observed, 'the antecedents of the—Princess.'

'Quite needless.'

'Married seven years ago to Charles Sydney Bamborough,' promptly giving the unnecessary information which was not wanted.

De Chauxville nodded.

'Where is Sydney Bamborough?' asked Vassili, with his mask-like smile.

'Dead,' replied the other quietly.

'Prove it.'

De Chauxville looked up sharply. The cigarette dropped from his fingers to the floor. His face was yellow and drawn, with a singular tremble of the lips, which were twisted to one side.

'Good God!' he whispered hoarsely.

There was only one thought in his mind—a sudden wild desire to rise up and stand by Etta against the whole world. Verily we cannot tell what love may make of us, whither it may lead us. We only know that it never leaves us as it found us.

Then, leaning quietly against the stove, Vassili stated his case.

'Rather more than a year ago,' he said, 'I received an offer of the papers connected with a great scheme in this country. After certain inquiries had been made I accepted the offer. I paid a fabulous price for the papers. They were brought to me by a lady wearing a thick veil—a lady I had never seen before. I asked no questions, and paid her the money. It subsequently transpired that the papers had been stolen, as you perhaps know, from the house of Count Stepán Lanovitch—the house to which you happen to be going—at Thors. Well, that is all ancient history. It is to be supposed that the papers were stolen by Sydney Bamborough, who brought them here—probably to this hotel, where his wife was staying. He handed her the papers, and she conveyed them to me in Paris. But before she reached Petersburg they would have been missed by Stepán Lanovitch, who would naturally suspect the man who had been staying in his house, Bamborough—a man with a doubtful reputation in the diplomatic world, a professed doer of dirty jobs. Foreseeing this, and knowing that the League was a big thing, with a few violent members on its books, Sydney Bamborough did not attempt to leave Russia by the western route. He probably decided to go through Nijni, down the Volga, across the Caspian, and so on to Persia and India. You follow me?'

'Perfectly!' answered De Chauxville coldly.

'I have been here a week,' went on the Russian spy, 'making inquiries. I have worked the whole affair out, link by link, till the evening when the husband and wife parted. She went west with the papers. Where did he go?'

De Chauxville picked up the cigarette, looked at it curiously, as at a relic—the relic of the moment of strongest emotion through which he had ever passed—and threw it into the ash-tray. He did not speak, and after a moment Vassili went on, stating his case with lawyer-like clearness.

'A body was found on the steppe,' he said; 'the body of a middle-aged man dressed as a small commercial traveller would dress. He had a little money in his pocket, but nothing to identify him. He was buried here in Tver by the police, who received their information by an anonymous postcard posted in Tver. The person who had found the body did not want to be implicated in any inquiry. Now, who found the body? Who was the dead man? Mrs. Sydney Bamborough has assumed that the dead man was her husband; on the strength of that assumption she has

become a princess. A frail foundation upon which to build up her fortunes, eh ?

‘How did she know that the body had been found ?’ asked De Chauxville, perceiving the weak point in his companion’s chain of argument.

‘It was reported shortly in the local newspapers,’ replied Vassili, ‘and repeated in one or two continental journals, as the police were of opinion that the man was a foreigner. Anyone watching the newspapers would see it—otherwise the incident might pass unobserved.’

‘And you think,’ said De Chauxville, suppressing his excitement with an effort, ‘that the lady has risked everything upon a supposition ?’

‘Knowing the lady, I do.’

De Chauxville’s dull eyes gleamed for a moment with an unwonted light. All the civilisation of the ages will not eradicate the primary instincts of men—and one of these, in good and bad alike, is to protect women. The Frenchman bit the end of his cigarette, and angrily wiped the tobacco from his lips.

‘She may have information of which you are ignorant,’ he suggested.

‘Precisely. It is that particular point which gives me trouble at the present moment. It is that that I wish to discover.’

De Chauxville looked up coolly. He saw his advantage.

‘Hence your sudden flow of communicativeness ?’ he said
Vassili nodded.

‘You cannot find out for yourself, so you seek my help ?’ went on the Frenchman.

Again the Russian nodded his head.

‘And your price ?’ said De Chauxville, drawing in his feet and leaning forward, apparently to study the pattern of the carpet. The action concealed his face. He was saving Etta, and he was ashamed of himself.

‘When you have the information you may name your own price,’ said the Russian coldly.

There was a long silence. Before speaking De Chauxville turned and took a glass of liqueur from the table. His hand was not quite steady. He raised the glass quickly and emptied it. Then he rose and looked at his watch. The silence was a compact.

‘When the lady dined with you in Paris, did she recognise you ?’ he asked.

‘Yes ; but she did not know that I recognised her.’

For the moment they both overlooked Steinmetz.

De Chauxville stood reflecting.

‘And your theory,’ he said, ‘respecting Sydney Bamborough—what is it?’

‘If he got away to Nijni and the Volga, it is probable that he is in Eastern Siberia or in Persia at this moment. He has not had time to get right across Asia yet.’

De Chauxville moved towards the door. With his fingers on the handle he paused again.

I leave early to-morrow morning,’ he said.

Vassili nodded, or rather he bowed, in his grand way.

Then De Chauxville went out of the room. They did not shake hands. There is sometimes shame among thieves.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN THE WEB.

‘WHAT I propose is that Catrina takes you for a drive, my dear Baron, with her two ponies.’

The Countess had taken very good care to refrain from making this proposal to Catrina alone. She was one of those mothers who rule their daughters by springing surprises upon them in a carefully-selected company where the daughter is not free to reply.

De Chauxville bowed with outspread hands.

‘If it will not bore Mademoiselle,’ he replied.

The Countess looked at her daughter with an unctuous smile, as if to urge her on to make the most of this opportunity. It was one of the Countess’s chief troubles that she could not by hook or crook involve Catrina in any sort of a love intrigue. She was the sort of mother who would have preferred to hear scandal about her daughter to hearing nothing.

‘If it will not freeze Monsieur,’ replied Catrina, with uncompromising honesty.

De Chauxville laughed in his frank way.

‘I am not afraid of coldness—of the atmosphere, Mademoiselle,’ he replied. ‘I am most anxious to see your beautiful country. It was quite dark during the last hour of my journey last night, and I had snow-sleepiness. I saw nothing.’

'You will see nothing but snow,' said Catrina.

'Which is like the reserve of a young girl,' added the Frenchman. 'It keeps warm that which is beneath it.'

'You need not be afraid with Catrina,' chimed in the Countess, nodding and becking in a manner that clearly showed her assumption to herself of some vague compliment. 'She drives beautifully. She is not nervous in that way. I have never seen anyone drive like her.'

'I have no doubt,' said De Chauxville, 'that Mademoiselle's hands are firm, despite their diminutiveness.'

The Countess was charmed—and showed it. She frowned at Catrina, who remained grave and looked at the clock.

'When would you like to go?' she asked De Chauxville, with that complete absence of affectation which the Russian, of all women of the world, alone have mastered in their conversation with men.

'Am I not at your service—now and always?' responded the gallant Baron.

'I hope not,' replied Catrina quietly. 'There are occasions when I have no use for you. Shall we say eleven o'clock?'

'With pleasure. Then I will go and write my letters now,' said the Baron, quitting the room.

'A charming man!' ejaculated the Countess, before the door was well closed.

'A fool,' corrected Catrina.

'I do not think you can say that, dear,' sighed the Countess, more in sorrow than in anger.

'A clever one,' answered Catrina. 'There is a difference. The clever ones are the worst.'

The Countess shrugged her shoulders hopelessly, and Catrina left the room. She went upstairs to her own little den, where the piano stood. It was the only room in the house that was not too warm, for here the window was occasionally opened—a proceeding which the Countess considered scarcely short of criminal.

Catrina began to play, feverishly, nervously, with all the weird force of her nature. She was like a very sick person seeking a desperate remedy—racing against time. It was her habit to take her breaking heart thus to the great masters, to interpret their thoughts in their music, welding their melodies to the needs of her own sorrow. She only had half an hour. Of late music had failed her a little. It had not given her the comfort she had

usually extracted from solitude and the piano. She was in a dangerous humour. She was afraid of trusting herself to De Chauville. The time fled, and her humour did not change. She was still playing when the door opened, and the Countess stood before her flushed and angry, either or both being the effect of stairs upon emotion.

'Catrina!' the elder lady exclaimed. 'The sleigh is at the door, and the Count is waiting. I cannot tell what you are thinking of. It is not everybody who would be so attentive to you. Just look at your hair. Why can't you dress like other girls?'

'Because I am not made like other girls,' replied Catrina—and who knows what bitterness of reproach there was in such an answer from daughter to mother?

'Hush, child!' replied the Countess, whose anger usually took the form of personal abuse. 'You are as the good God made you.'

'Then the good God must have made me in the dark,' cried Catrina, flinging out of the room.

'She will be down directly,' said the Countess Lanovitch to De Chauville, whom she found smoking a cigarette in the hall. 'She naturally—he! he!—wishes to make a careful toilet.'

De Chauville bowed gravely, without committing himself to any observation, and offered her a cigarette, which she accepted. Having achieved his purpose, he did not now propose to convey the impression that he admired Catrina.

In a few moments the girl appeared, drawing on her fur gloves. Before the door was opened the Countess discreetly retired to the enervating warmth of her own apartments.

Catrina gathered up the reins and gave a little cry, at which the ponies leapt forward, and in a whirl of driven snow the sleigh glided off between the pines.

At first there was no opportunity of conversation, for the ponies were fresh and troublesome. The road over which they were passing had not been beaten down by the passage of previous sleighs, so that the powdery snow rose up like dust, and filled the eyes and mouth.

'It will be better presently,' gasped Catrina, wrestling with her fractious little Tartar thoroughbreds, 'when we get out on to the high road.'

De Chauville sat quite still. If he felt any misgiving as to her power of mastering her team he kept it to himself. There

was a subtle difference in his manner towards Catrina when they were alone together, a suggestion of *camaraderie*, of a common interest and a common desire of which she was conscious without being able to put definite meaning to it.

It annoyed and alarmed her. While giving her full attention to the management of the sleigh, she was beginning to dread the first words of this man, who was merely wielding a cheap power acquired in the shady course of his career. There is nothing so disarming as the assumed air of intimate knowledge of one's private thoughts and actions. De Chauville assumed this air with a skill against which Catrina's dogged strength of character was incapable of battling. His manner conveyed the impression that he knew more of Catrina's inward thoughts than any other living being, and she was simple enough to be frightened into the conclusion that she had betrayed herself to him. There is no simpler method of discovering a secret than to ignore its existence.

It is possible that De Chauville became aware of Catrina's sidelong glances of anxiety in his direction. He may have divined that silence was more effective than speech.

He sat looking straight in front of him, as if too deeply absorbed in his own thoughts to take even a passing interest in the scenery.

'Why did you come here?' asked Catrina suddenly.

De Chauville seemed to awake from a reverie. He turned and looked at her in assumed surprise. They were on the high road now, where the snow was beaten down, so conversation was easy.

'But—to see you, Mademoiselle.'

'I am not *that* sort of girl,' answered Catrina coldly. 'I want the truth.'

De Chauville gave a short laugh and looked at her.

'Prophets and kings have sought the truth, Mademoiselle, and have not found it,' he said lightly.

Catrina made no answer to this. Her ponies required considerable attention. Also, there are some minds like large banking houses—not dealing in small change. That which passes in or out of such minds has its own standard of importance. Such people are not of much use in these days, when we like to touch things lightly, adorning a tale but pointing no moral.

'I would ask you to believe that your society was one incentive to make me accept the Countess's kind hospitality,' the Frenchman observed after a pause.

‘And?’

De Chauville looked at her. He had not met many women of solid intellect.

‘And?’ repeated Catrina.

‘I have others, of course.’

Catrina gave a little nod and waited.

‘I wish to be near Alexis,’ added De Chauville.

Catrina was staring straight in front of her. Her face had acquired a habit of hardening at the mention of Paul’s name. It was stone-like now, and set. Perhaps she might have forgiven him if he had loved her once, if only for a little while. She might have forgiven him, if only for the remembrance of that little while. But Paul had always been a man of set purpose, and such men are cruel. Even for her sake, even for the sake of his own vanity, he had never pretended to love Catrina. He had never mistaken gratified vanity for dawning love, as millions of men do. Or perhaps he was without vanity. Some few men are so constructed.

‘Do you love him so?’ asked Catrina, with a grim smile distorting her strong face.

‘As much as you, Mademoiselle,’ replied De Chauville.

Catrina started. She was not sure that she hated Paul. Towards Etta, there was no mistake in her feeling, and this was so strong that, like an electric current, there was enough of it to pass through the wife and reach the husband.

Passion, like character, does not grow in crowded places. In great cities men are all more or less alike. It is only in solitary abodes that strong natures grow up in their own way. Catrina had grown to womanhood in one of the solitary places of the earth. She had no facile axiom, no powerful precedent to guide her every step through life. The woman who was in daily contact with her was immeasurably beneath her in mental power, in force of character, in those possibilities of love or hatred which go to make a strong life for good or for evil. By the side of her daughter the Countess Lanovitch was as the willow, swayed by every wind, in the neighbourhood of the oak, crooked and still and strong.

‘In Petersburg you pledged yourself to help me,’ said De Chauville. And although she knew that in the letter this was false, she did not contradict him. ‘I came here to claim fulfilment of your promise.’

The hard blue eyes beneath the fur cap stared straight in front of them. Catrina seemed to be driving like one asleep, for she noted nothing by the roadside. So far as eye could reach over the snowclad plain, through the silent pines, these two were alone in a white, dead world of their own. Catrina never drove with bells. There was no sound beyond the high-pitched drone of the steel runners over the powdery snow. They were alone; unseen, unheard save of that Ear that listens in the waste places of the world.

'What do you want me to do?' she asked.

'Oh, not very much,' answered De Chauxville—a cautious man who knew a woman's humour. Catrina driving a pair of ponies in the clear sharp air of Central Russia, and Catrina playing the piano in the enervating, flower-scented atmosphere of a drawing-room, were two different women. De Chauxville was not the man to mistake the one for the other.

'Not very much, Mademoiselle,' he answered. 'I should like Madame la Comtesse to invite the whole Osterno party to dine, and sleep, perhaps, if one may suggest it.'

Catrina wanted this too. She wanted to torture herself with the sight of Etta, beautiful, self-confident, carelessly cognisant of Paul's love. She wanted to see Paul look at his wife with the open admiration which she had set down as something else than love—something immeasurably beneath love as Catrina understood that passion. Her soul, brooding under a weight of misery, was ready to welcome any change, should it only mean a greater misery.

'I can manage that,' she said, 'if they will come. It was a prearranged matter that there should be a bear-hunt in our forests.'

'That will do,' answered De Chauxville reflectively; 'in a few days, perhaps, if it suits the Countess.'

Catrina made no reply. After a pause she spoke again, in her strange, jerky way.

'What will you gain by it?' she asked.

De Chauxville shrugged his shoulders.

'Who knows?' he answered. 'There are many things I want to know; many questions which can be answered only by one's own observation. I want to see them together. Are they happy?'

Catrina's face hardened.

'If there is a God in heaven, and He hears our prayers, they ought not to be,' she replied curtly.

'She looked happy enough in Petersburg,' said the Frenchman, who never told the truth for its own sake. Whenever he thought that Catrina's hatred needed stimulation he mentioned Etta's name.

'There are other questions in my mind,' he went on, 'some of which you can answer, Mademoiselle, if you care to.'

Catrina's face expressed no great willingness to oblige.

'The Charity League,' said De Chauxville, looking at her keenly; 'I have always had a feeling of curiosity respecting it. Was, for instance, our friend the Prince Pavlo implicated in that unfortunate affair?'

Catrina flushed suddenly. She did not take her eyes from the ponies. She was conscious of the unwonted colour in her cheeks, which was slowly dying away beneath her companion's relentless gaze.

'You need not trouble to reply, Mademoiselle,' said De Chauxville, with his dark smile; 'I am answered.'

Catrina pulled the ponies up with a jerk, and proceeded to turn their willing heads towards home. She was alarmed and disturbed. Nothing seemed to be safe from the curiosity of this man, no secret secure, no prevarication of the slightest avail.

'There are other questions in my mind,' said De Chauxville quietly, 'but not now. Mademoiselle is no doubt tired.'

He leant back, and when at length he spoke it was to give utterance to the trite commonplace of which he made a conversational study.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN THE CASTLE OF THORS.

A WEEK later Catrina, watching from the window of her own small room, saw Paul lift Etta from the sleigh, and the sight made her clench her hands until the knuckles shone like polished ivory.

She turned and looked at herself in the mirror. No one knew how she had tried one dress after another since luncheon, alone in her two rooms, having sent her maid downstairs. No one knew the bitterness in this girl's heart as she contemplated her own reflection.

She went slowly downstairs to the long, dimly-lighted drawing-room. As she entered she heard her mother's cackling voice.

'Yes, Princess,' the Countess was saying, 'it is a quaint old house; little more than a fortified farm, I know. But my husband's family were always strange. They seem always to have ignored the little comforts and elegancies of life.'

'It is most interesting,' answered Etta's voice, and Catrina stepped forward into the light.

Formal greetings were exchanged, and Catrina saw Etta look anxiously towards the door through which she had just come. She thought that she was looking for her husband. But it was Claude de Chauville for whose appearance Etta was waiting.

Paul and Steinmetz entered at the same moment by another door, and Catrina, who was talking to Maggie in English, suddenly stopped.

'Ah, Catrina,' said Paul, 'we have broken new ground for you. There was no track from here to Osterno through the forest. I made one this afternoon, so you have no excuse for remaining away now.'

'Thank you,' answered Catrina, withdrawing her cold hand hurriedly from his friendly grasp.

'Miss Delafield,' went on Paul, 'admires our country as much as you do.'

'I was just telling Mademoiselle,' said Maggie, speaking French with an honest English accent.

Paul nodded, and left them together.

'Yes,' the Countess was saying at the other end of the gloomy room; 'yes, we are greatly attached to Thors: Catrina, perhaps, more than I. I have some happy associations, and many sorrowful ones. But then—*mon Dieu!*—how isolated we are!'

'It is rather far from—anywhere,' acceded Etta, who was not attending, although she appeared to be interested.

'Far! Princess, I often wonder how Paris and Thors can be in the same world! Before our—our troubles we used to live in Paris a portion of the year. At least I did, while my poor husband travelled about. He had a hobby, you know, poor man! Humanity was his hobby. I have always found that men who seek to do good to their fellows are never thanked. Have you noticed that? The human race is not grateful *en gros*. There is a little gratitude in the individual, but none in the race.'

'None,' answered Etta absently.

'It was so with the Charity League,' went on the Countess volubly. She paused and looked round with her feeble eyes.

'We are all friends,' she went on; 'so it is safe to mention the Charity League, is it not?'

'No,' answered Steinmetz from the fireplace; 'no, Madame. There is only one friend to whom you may safely mention that.'

'Ah! Bad example!' exclaimed the Countess playfully. 'You are there! I did not see you enter. And who is that friend?'

'The fair lady who looks at you from your mirror,' replied Steinmetz, with a face of stone.

The Countess laughed and shook her cap to one side.

'Well,' she said, 'I can do no harm in talking of such things, as I know nothing of them. My poor husband—my poor mistaken Stepán—placed no confidence in his wife. And now he is in Siberia. I believe he works in a bootmaker's shop. I pity the people who wear the boots; but perhaps he only puts in the laces. You hear, Paul? He placed no confidence in his wife, and now he is in Siberia. Let that be a warning to you—eh, Princess? I hope he tells you everything.'

'Put not your trust in princesses,' said Steinmetz from the hearthrug, where he was still warming his hands, for he had driven Maggie over. 'It says so in the Bible.'

'Princes, profane one!' exclaimed the Countess with a laugh—'princes, not princesses!'

'It may be so. I bow to your superior literary attainments,' replied Steinmetz, looking casually and significantly at a pile of yellow-backed foreign novels on a side-table.

'No,' the Countess went on, addressing her conversation to Etta; 'no, my husband—figure to yourself, Princess—told me nothing. I never knew that he was implicated in this great scheme. I do not know now who else was concerned in it. It was all so sudden, so unexpected, so terrible. It appears that he kept the papers in this very house—in that room through there. It was his study——'

'My dear Countess, silence!' interrupted Steinmetz at this moment, breaking into the conversation in his masterful way and enabling Etta to get away. Catrina at the other end of the room was listening, hard-eyed, breathless. It was the sight of Catrina's face that made Steinmetz go forward. He had not been looking at Catrina, but at Etta, who was perfect in her composure and steady self-control.

'Do you want to enter the boot trade also?' asked Steinmetz cheerfully, in a lowered voice.

'Heaven forbid!' cried the Countess.

'Then let us talk of safer things.'

The short twilight was already brooding over the land. The room, lighted only by small square windows, grew darker and darker until Catrina rang for lamps.

'I hate a dark room,' she said shortly to Maggie.

When De Chauville came in, a few minutes later, Catrina was at the piano. The room was brilliantly lighted, and on the table gleamed and glittered the silver tea-things. The intermediate meal had been disposed of, but the samovar had been left alight, as is the habit at Russian afternoon teas.

Catrina looked up when the Frenchman entered, but did not cease playing.

'There is no need for introductions, I think,' said the Countess.

'We all know M. de Chauville,' replied Paul quietly, and the two men exchanged a glance.

De Chauville shook hands with the new-comers, and, while the Countess prepared tea for him, launched into a long description of the preparations for the bear-hunt of the following day. He addressed his remarks exclusively to Paul, as between enthusiasts and fellow-sportsmen. Gradually Paul thawed a little, and made one or two suggestions which betrayed a deep knowledge and a dawning interest.

'We shall only be three rifles,' said De Chauville, 'Steinmetz, you, and I; and I must ask you to bear in mind the fact that I am no shot—a mere amateur, my dear Prince. The Countess has been good enough to leave the whole matter in my hands. I have seen the keepers, and I have arranged that they come to-night at eleven o'clock to see us and to report progress. They know of three bears, and are attempting to ring them.'

The Frenchman was really full of information and enthusiasm. There were many details upon which he required Paul's advice, and the two men talked together with less constraint than they had hitherto done. De Chauville had picked up a vast deal of technical matter, and handled his little knowledge with a skill which bade fair to deprive it of its proverbial danger. He presently left Steinmetz and the Prince engaged in a controversy with the Countess as to a meeting-place at the luncheon-hour.

Maggie and Catrina were at the piano. Etta was looking at a book of photographs.

'A charming house, Princess,' said De Chauxville, in a voice that all could hear while the music happened to be soft. But Catrina's music was more remarkable for strength than for softness.

'Charming,' replied Etta.

The music rose into a swelling burst of harmonious chords.

'I must see you, Princess,' said De Chauxville.

Etta glanced across the room towards her husband and Steinmetz.

'Alone,' added the Frenchman coolly.

Etta turned a page of the album and looked critically into a photograph.

'Must!' she said, with a little frown.

'Must,' repeated De Chauxville.

'A word I do not care about,' said Etta, with raised eyebrows. The music was soft again.

'It is ten years since I held a rifle,' said De Chauxville. 'Ah, Madame, you do not know the excitement. I pity ladies, for they have no sport—no big game.'

'Personally, Monsieur,' answered Etta, with her bright laugh, 'I do not grudge you your big game. Suppose you miss the bear, or whatever it may be?'

'Then,' said De Chauxville, with a brave shrug of the shoulders, 'it is the turn of the bear. The excitement is his—the laugh is with him.'

Catrina's foot was upon the loud pedal again.

'Nevertheless, Madame,' said De Chauxville, 'I make so bold as to use the word. You perhaps know me well enough to be aware that I am rarely bold unless my ground is sure.'

'I should not boast of it,' answered Etta; 'there is nothing to be proud of. It is easy enough to be bold if you are certain of victory.'

'When defeat would be intolerable even a certain victory requires care! And I cannot afford to lose.'

'Lose what?' inquired Etta.

De Chauxville looked at her, but he did not answer. The music was soft again.

'I suppose that at Osterno you set no value upon a bear-skin,' he said after a pause.

'We have many,' admitted Etta. 'But I love fur, or trophies of any description. Paul has killed a great deal.'

‘Ah!’

‘Yes,’ answered Etta, and the music rose again. ‘I should like to know,’ she went on, ‘upon what assumption you make use of a word which does not often—annoy me.’

‘I have a good memory, Madame. Besides,’ he paused, looking round the room, ‘there are associations within these walls which stimulate the memory.’

‘What do you mean?’ asked Etta in a hard voice. The hand holding the album suddenly shook like a leaf in the wind.

De Chauville had stood upright, his hand at his moustache, after the manner of a man whose small-talk is exhausted. It would appear that he was wondering how he could gracefully get away from the Princess to pay his devoirs elsewhere.

‘I cannot tell you now,’ he answered; ‘Catrina is watching us across the piano. You must beware, Madame, of those cold blue eyes.’

He moved away, going towards the piano, where Maggie was standing behind Catrina’s chair. He was like a woman, inasmuch as he could not keep away from his failures.

‘Are you advanced, Miss Delafield?’ he asked, with his deferential little bow. ‘Are you modern?’

‘I am neither; I have no desire for even the cheapest form of notoriety. Why do you ask?’ replied Maggie.

‘I was merely wondering whether we were to count you among our rifles to-morrow. One never knows what ladies will do next; not ladies—I apologise—women. I suppose it is those who are not by birth ladies who aspire to the proud name of women. The modern Woman—with a capital W—is not a lady—*n’est ce pas!*’

‘She does not mind your abuse, Monsieur,’ laughed Maggie. ‘So long as you do not ignore her, she is happy. But you may set your mind at rest as regards to-morrow. I have never let off a gun in my life, and I am sensible enough not to begin on bears.’

De Chauville made a suitable reply, and remained by the piano talking to the two young ladies until Etta rose and came towards them. He then crossed to the other side of the room and engaged Paul in the discussion of further plans for the morrow.

It was soon time to dress for dinner, and Etta was forced to forego the opportunity she sought to exchange a word alone with De Chauville. That astute gentleman carefully avoided allowing her this opportunity. He knew the value of a little suspense.

During dinner and afterwards, when at length the gentlemen

came to the drawing-room, the conversation was of a sporting tendency. Bears, bear-hunting, and bear stories held supreme sway. More than once De Chauville returned to this subject. Twice he avoided Etta.

In some ways this man was courageous. He delayed giving Etta her opportunity until there was a question of retiring to bed in view of the early start required by the next day's arrangements. It had been finally settled that the three younger ladies should drive over to a woodman's cottage at the far end of the forest, where luncheon was to be served. While this item of the programme was arranged, De Chauville looked straight at Etta across the table.

At length she had the chance afforded to her, deliberately, by De Chauville.

'What did you mean?' she asked at once.

'I have received information which, had I known it three months ago, would have made a difference in your life.'

'What difference?'

'I should have been your husband, instead of that thick-headed giant.'

Etta laughed, but her lips were for the moment colourless.

'When am I to see you alone?'

Etta shrugged her shoulders. She had plenty of spirit.

'Please do not be dramatic or mysterious; I am tired. Good-night.'

She rose and concealed a simulated yawn.

De Chauville looked at her with his sinister smile, and Etta suddenly saw the resemblance which Paul had noted between this man and the grinning mask of the lynx in the smoking-room at Osterno.

'When?' repeated he.

Etta shrugged her shoulders.

'I wish to speak to you about the—Charity League,' said De Chauville.

Etta's eyes dilated. She made a step or two away from him, but she came back.

'I shall not go to the luncheon to-morrow, if you care to leave the hunt early.'

De Chauville bowed.

(To be continued.)

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